

Whetstone – Chapter 17

Can anyone name a single situation where pacifism has worked in international affairs? When has appeasement ever worked to stop a dictator? Did appeasement stop Hitler? Did delays in use of force have any effect on Milosevic? In Bosnia? In Kosovo? Would Israel even still exist if they were pacifist in 1948? In 1956? In 1967? In 1973? Today? Did the arms inspectors and pacifists help the 1,000,000 innocent Iraqis that Saddam Hussein killed (600,000 under the age of 5)?

Did a pacifist United Nations help the 700,000 Tutsis slaughtered in Rwanda? Did turning a "blind eye" stop the chopping off of limbs in Sierra Leone? Did inaction save the 2,000,000 Cambodians killed by Pol Pot? Did the Buddhists' pacifism help them in Tibet against the Chinese Army? Did the pacifist movement in the United States in the late 1930's save 6,000,000 Jews? Is anyone convinced that the Islamist terrorism is going to go away anytime soon?

They didn't "get mad" at us because of the war in Iraq. In 1993, they bombed the World Trade Center in New York the first time. This was before President Bush was even governor of Texas. In 1998, they bombed the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. That was four years before the Iraqi war and 2½ years before Bush was President.

In 2000, they bombed the USS Cole, killing US sailors. That was two years before the Iraqi war and before Bush was President. On September 11, 2001, 19 Muslim Arabs flew airplanes into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, killing 3,000 innocent men and women at their jobs. This was 1½ years before the Iraqi war. Living in denial or "hating Bush" is not going to make that go away. Does anyone think that denial will make us safer?

This is a war. It is a war that may last for our lifetimes. While one death is too many, the soldiers who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last five-plus years might well be saving hundreds of thousands of lives in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and other major cities in the United States.

Do we wait until we are attacked again? Do we wait for those who want us to fail to support us? Do we elect those to protect us who think we can persuade the Islamists to "play nice" or "give them what they want"?

It is time to be aware of the greatest threat to peace in our lifetime: Islamofascism.

On December 25, 2006, the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun published a government document dated December 20 about Japan's intention to develop small nuclear warheads. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki immediately refuted the report's authenticity, saying, "The government does not know anything about the existence of the document." Nevertheless, the question of a Japanese nuclear bomb remains open. There were more articles on my computer, but you get the idea... it wasn't ever a question of if, but only when and what.

Living in the PRK, the land of fruits and nuts, I supposed that some of my readers had difficulty accepting my rather recurrent theme, a series of events generally terminating in WW III. I felt there would be some event that would loosen the strings on nations' nuclear arsenals causing a regional nuclear war and a respondent terrorist attack on the Great Satan, us. Once the genie was out of the bottle, some marginal event would lead to WW III. There were several possibilities, including a Pakistan-India exchange or less likely, an attack by China. However, if China opted to grab Taiwan, all bets were off. Hundreds or thousands of warheads would be exchanged, ending civilization as we knew it.

100 million megatons – the amount of energy released by the asteroid that hit Yucatán and wiped out the dinosaurs. The name of the crater was Chicxulub and it caused the K-T extinction. That produced an equivalent to nuclear winter that probably lasted for thousands or 10 of thousands years. Our more recent exchange was nothing by comparison; hence the aftereffects wouldn't last nearly as long.

For my part, my life expectancy could be measured by the available medications. It wasn't that I took that many; it was more how necessary they were. I needed insulin, additional oral diabetic drugs, control for a sensitive digestive system and something to keep my hypertension in check. And don't forget the blood thinner, aspirin. I could substitute to an extent, Actos and Amaryl for Avandaryl, eliminate the Plavix when it was no longer available and try various other anti-hypertensives, although from years of trials, we found that Diovan HCT worked best. Also, most any SSRI would work once we could get the dose adjusted. My big worry was the Xanax, it was necessary to turn my brain off, hence was number one on my list of meds.

Diovan was an ARB and there were others: Atacand, Avapro, Avalide, Cozaar, Hyzaar, Benicar and Micardis. Some contained a diuretic and some didn't, I use Diovan HCT 160/12.5 BID. Angiotensin II receptor blockers can be used to treat heart failure in some people who cannot tolerate ACE inhibitors or who have kidney disease from diabetes (diabetic nephropathy) and in people with type 2 diabetes. I'd never been prescribed an ACE inhibitor. But we did have 10 new doctors coming in.

Despite any assertion to the contrary, I knew I wouldn't live forever. If we could establish an operating recovery system with the things to provide for our needs and reasonable security, we'd more or less be back where we started. Just exactly where that would be on the evolutionary scale of civilization, I couldn't say. As long as we could keep the machines running, it would remain close to our starting point, minus advanced communications and advanced medical treatments. So many of our communications systems depended on satellites, I doubted we'd have our former level of phone service, or internet. Conversely, as long as hams could generate the necessary electricity, we'd have some communications.

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I worked a deal with Derek, he'd report the security/military adventures and Damon and I would continue to journal the local civilian events. There was one string attached, I had to quit avoiding Aaron's efforts to see that my needs were being met. This would turn into a battle of wills and I'd had far more practice. For one thing, I began setting an alarm clock to get me up at 6am. I take care of my basic needs, the 3 S's, and have breakfast. By 7am I was ready to go. I also assigned a group of chores to him, cleaning the firearms, keeping the pickup ready to roll and taking care of Sharon's and my horses. He adjusted far quicker than I did; I was used to staying up until 1am and getting up at 10am.

We also took to carrying what Aaron called the 'old man's medical kit' that contained a bottle of oxygen, a portable defibrillator, nitro tablets, plus an advanced first aid kit. He was trained to establish an IV with Ringer's or normal saline, and administer drugs like Lidocaine, sodium bicarb, epinephrine 1:1000, dextrose 25%, etc. getting instructions via radio. There was an ample supply of Art Cel gauze pads in case I scratched myself and tried to bleed to death and QuikClot ACS. This was almost as bad as being in a nursing home.

We had only shopped in the Safeway in Benson to fill in. Now, they became a prime customer for things like spuds. Out in the shed were several of those bioconverters that produced 55 gallons of biodiesel in 3 hours. They were still in the shipping cartons, I'd never bothered to set them up. The replacement generator they found was also a Kohler, 2 150REOZJB, each capable of ~417 amps of prime power. Running 3 generators gave us ~1,250 amps, more than enough for our expanding trailer park. It took a while to locate a synchronizer, Damon did that by reading the instruction manual for the new generator and determined that they were built in.

One of Mary's cousins was a diesel mechanic and could rebuild anything, provided you could find the parts. I had a set for the smaller Kohler, and we went looking for parts for the larger genset. Both had John Deere engines, but different sizes. That biodiesel converter could barely keep up to the generators. They brought back drums of Methanol from both Tucson and Phoenix, once the radiation died down a little. With that and a few cases of sodium hydroxide (lye), I think we were set to go.

"You done well, Damon, remind me to mention you in my will."

"Gee, thanks, you nut."

"Yep. That's what I told my Dad when he brought up his estate."

"What do you mean?"

"He asked my opinion about how to distribute his estate. He'd already written the will, so I don't know why he bothered."

"Huh, I suspected he was like that, but I never knew for sure."

"Forget it; he's 10 years dead and buried. I don't know if we'll ever see anything out of the trust or not."

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Taking care of Dad was becoming more of a chore since he had gotten up from his chair and started shuffling around more. Battle of wills was a perfect description for what he and I were doing, with poor Aaron caught in the middle. The kid took his marching orders from me, but those orders included "listen to Grandpa and do what he says so long as he doesn't get too carried away or interfere with watching him". That asked a lot of discretion from a guy just now becoming a man who loved us both and didn't want us fighting over how much Dad was doing.

I came up with a plan to make things easier. Since we were one of the last bastions of democracy we needed an elected council to run things. After a little organizing, I nominated Dad to serve as treasurer for the community. It made sense to me, seeing as he was already the de facto banker and richest man. Dad protested that he was too old for the job immediately. It didn't do him much good, though; he was elected by 80% of the vote in a 5 way election, a landslide in every sense of the word.

His duties in his newly elected office added a couple of hours of paperwork to his morning, keeping him in his chair long enough for Aaron to finish all the little tasks that Dad gave him.

I'm pretty sure that he cut me out of his will when he won. (Not!!!)

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The United States Marine Corps was organized as the land combat portion of the United States Navy. This happened way back when there were only two branches, each had their own Cabinet secretary, and they were constantly fighting with each other over everything from funding to facilities.

The Army handles all aspects of land combat except amphibious assault, with a few exceptions. The Navy handles all aspects of maritime combat, again with a few exceptions. The Air Force owns the "third dimension" of the battlefield, the air. The Marine Corps by its very nature, though, has to incorporate all three areas into its sphere of control. The primary purpose of the Corps is to punch a big hole in the coastal defenses of its enemy up to an operational depth of roughly 50 miles. They are pretty darn good at it, too.

Because of the "limited" nature of its sphere of influence the Marine Corps is usually the last on the list for new equipment and funding. Every piece of equipment that the Army uses is evaluated for application to the Marine mission. The Corps makes up the difference by more intensive training.

A typical Army soldier when attacked will find potential targets, evaluate them for legitimacy, and then shoot the ones he can confirm as enemy. A typical Marine in the same situation will look for potential targets and shoot them. The removal of one step makes the Marines faster to react in combat and deadlier, whereas the Army soldiers are less likely to create collateral damage.

Different usage begets different mindsets.

If I knew I was going into an ugly fight I would want at least some Marines because they would kill an awful lot of my enemies in short order. If discretion was required, though, I wouldn't want them within a hundred miles of my operation. The big problem for all the jarheads in Iraq was that the American public, coached by the mainstream media, wanted discretion when we needed destruction. Dad and I probably disagree on this point because of the fourth generation war, but there you have it.

Maybe more of those reporters should have come with us on convoys in Iraq. From experience, the first time you have a roadside bomb nearly kill you and people that you are responsible for, it changes your way of thinking. Maybe then they would have concentrated less on the methods our boys and girls used over there and more on what we needed to do back home to fully support them.

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My convoys went without a hitch until the fifth go around. On that trip, a Mexican patrol caught up to us by accident I think.

They had two BRDM-2 recon trucks with 14.5mm machine guns mounted, and a total of 8 troops between them. The convoy reacted swiftly, though, opening up on them before they could bring their guns to bear. Less than 15 seconds later both trucks were burning and my truck commanders were trying to get the gunners to stop shooting the survivors as they bailed out without much success.

.50 caliber bullets don't just make holes in people. They blow large pieces off of them. Grenades from Mk19s leave even less when they explode. There wasn't enough left of those Mexicans to identify as human beings, much less figure out which unit they were with.

We had to act fast, before that patrol was declared missing and the Mexican General decided to send out a search and rescue patrol. I figured that we had less than an hour before they were missed.

We loaded everything that we could, until the springs on the trucks groaned. Everything else was transferred to three shelters and rigged up with C4 and det cord. I spooled out a thousand yards of fuse for the charges and rigged it to light off all three charges at once.

Two puffs on the stogie to get it glowing, and I lit the fuses. Then we hauled butt as fast as those overloaded trucks would go. The fuse was connected to a number 8 cap which activated the det cord.

It seemed to take forever, but the charges all went off as planned as far as I could tell. Even at a few miles of distance the shock wave was strong enough to push the trucks around a bit, and one of the gunners who didn't like earplugs had to be relieved while the medic treated him for a pair of ruptured eardrums.

The blasts made a nice mushroom cloud. Pretty in the dying light of a setting sun, but it told the Méxicans that there were insurgents in the area as surely as sending them a telegram.

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Bill had an interesting hobby now. He was using a tabletop trainer he had swiped before he left Iowa to hunt for a tank crew.

"No, no, no, you are trying to move too fast! If you swing these controls too fast you will never get a good lay! Slow is smooth, smooth is fast! Quit fighting it!"

"But Derek said..." Damon began.

"The LT isn't here! You listen to me, or you don't train! As a matter of fact, we need to call it a day anyway. Practice tracking on your own. Remember to move the reticle to the target, dump your lead, lase, and blaze. Practice at least a half-hour before chow. Next!"

Damon still seemed to think that Bill was a lower rank because he wasn't blood kin. Bill was having a hard time disabusing him of the notion, too. Bill sighed and rubbed his eyes. He needed a drink, but training and drinking didn't mix.

Mary sat down behind the computer. Bill opened his eyes and blinked.

"Hi, Mary. What's up?"

"I want to give it a try."

"No problem, but let me get the guys through this first."

Mary turned to the group of men standing by. "You guys got a problem with me having a go?"

The group shook their heads. None of them was looking forward to another session with Bill's acid wit and sharp comments.

Bill took it in stride. "Fine then. You guys go fill sandbags for a while. I'll train her, since she still wants to do the training." One by one, the group of hopefuls shuffled off, griping about the pointlessness of filling sandbags.

"Alright, now. Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast. Grip the palm switch to move the turret. Remember to dump your lead by releasing and grabbing the palm switch again. Are you ready?"

Mary nodded, focused on the screen.

"Begin," Bill said, pressing a button on his laptop. The screen began to scroll as Mary scanned back and forth, looking for the telltale bright spot of a target signature. Bill noticed that she only missed it by a few seconds when it appeared and that it took less than the usual time for a new gunner to get on target and lose. She pressed the trigger and the screen jumped, just like it would in a real tank from the recoil of the main gun.

"Get back on it and evaluate your shot," Bill prompted.

Mary laid the target reticle back on faster than Damon had. "Hit, no kill," she said.

"Target, reengage," replied Bill, impressed.

"Identified."

"Fire"

"On the way," said Mary as she squeezed the trigger. The screen bucked again. Bill noted that she had hit the target again in the top foot or so. On a real target, this would probably scare the bejeezus out of the crew inside but not destroy the tank. One limiter on the tabletop trainer was that the computer always awarded a kill on a second hit, even if the round would have glanced off of a corner.

"Target, ceasefire. Check your work," said Bill.

Mary scanned again. "No more targets."

Bill hit the freeze button on his laptop. "Not bad for the first time. The best I've seen here, in fact. You jerked the trigger both times, pulling the round up and right on the target. You need to squeeze it, just like a rifle. I take it back."

"What?"

"Spence once argued with me about women on the tank. I said that they had no business being there. You just proved me wrong in part. If you can hump a sabot round as well as you shoot, you can be on my crew."

"It's Spence's tank, Bill."

"And I'm his gunner. Even he won't cross me if I say no to a crew member. He knows that crew cohesion is as important as crew training."

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Ain't no porta potty's in a tank, I couldn't see why Mary couldn't be a crewmember. Then again, I'd never been in a tank, not even Derek's tank. I had stuck my head in a gutted out Sherman they had at EAFB for an observation post, but that didn't tell you anything, because of it being gutted. That was one hell of a name for a tank, 'White Elephant'. They kept it in the machine shed, out of sight, out of mind. Besides, Derek said he didn't want anyone knowing we had it; it was an open invitation to the Mexican Army to invade the area.

Still, once they had the crew trained, they had to take it somewhere and fire it, crew orientation or whatever. Derek said, gunnery practice, according to the tables. They'd skip tables 9 through 13, they only had one tank. I was feeling somewhat constrained, they wouldn't let me off the acreage now. Something about Indians in the bushes (gooks in the wire). I wasn't worried about that; they had to get past the minefield first.

Gooks in the wire??? Did that mean that Charlie was allied with the Latin Army? You'd have thought that anyone with half a brain would have beat feet south. But no, they waited for the radiation to die down and continued their invasion. Before this was over, I'd be doing like R. Lee and killing watermelons.

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My Dad tells a story about a gopher snake and an air force buddy that always tickles me. The gist of the story is that his buddy was too regular in his habits. Dad and some others coiled up a dead gopher snake in a candy machine that the buddy in question visited every night and scared the guy half to death.

The reason I refer to this story is that it applies to keeping on your toes. In Iraq we had to keep changing our schedule so that no pattern emerged. Patterns of behavior leave you open to ambush easier. Thus, Airman Second Class Dukes got frightened badly by a dead gopher snake. Thus also did a lot of good people in Iraq get killed and maimed.

We had a problem. All the activity we had going on in and around the compound set a pattern. Sooner or later, someone was going to pick up on it.

Wouldn't you know it?

Convoy number five got hit. Some bright eyed Mexican Sergeant (an oxymoron) had noticed that Fort Huachuca was too well defended for a deserted Army post. So he

waited on the most likely avenue of approach for someone to come along. It was just his bad luck that his lieutenant couldn't place an ambush in hiding very well.

"Dad, I think that they're going to be coming for us."

"Damn. It's another Katy bar the door, here come the Indians. Think I'll be able to hit any of them?"

"I hope it doesn't come to that yet, Dad. It's better to hit them before they hit you. I think we should start playing Cavalry with them. Are you game?"

"What do you have in mind?"

"Just applying lessons learned. I always said that an American could come up with a better IED. Maybe we should give it a try."

"Go for it. Remember we have all those M183 satchel charges."

"I remember, Dad. I also remember that howitzer shells work wonders, too. Ok, so one satchel charge, two HE and one WP 155mm shells, and a proper detonation rig that will function with a remote trigger. Say, the clacker from a Claymore?"

"That will work."

"One in front, one in back, and claymores all around. We rig it all to go on one clacker, so that the whole convoy gets hit at once. A few brave souls armed with antitank rockets and heavy machine guns to clean up the mess, and transportation to get them out of dodge. How's that sound?"

"Don't we want to hit them in waves?"

"If we hit them with everything at once they won't have time to react."

"Oh."

"If we are going to do this, our rule has to be 'no survivors', El Degüello. We'll attract enough attention just hitting them. Convoys and patrols that disappear are a big morale problem; one that is sure to attract the attention of even the most idiotic officers. They will have to deal with us. Let's hope that they try to deal with us with a heavy hand, because they will recruit for us."

"But that will put everyone here at risk. I got a lot of time and money in this little safe haven."

"They shouldn't suspect that little old Whetstone is the heart and soul of the operations. If we hit them as hard as we can when we strike they will think that they are dealing with

a larger force; maybe even Obama. They will aim at where they think he is staging forces. Our enemies will fight each other, accomplishing more than we could do alone."

"Makes sense."

"Then let's get to it. Maybe we can come up with some ANFO to boost the charges."

"Why?"

"I want to cut the road, not just bust up the head of the column. One by one, we close the roads east of their positions. They will try to find a bypass first. That will force them into the teeth of Obama's forces."

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We were bringing the war to us; I got out all of my weapons and cleaned and oiled them, getting ready for the fight. It was a good plan, if it worked. If not, the Tired Old Man would become the Dead Tired Old Man. I had my weapons lined up, but kept going back to my favorite, my original M1A Loaded. I must have loaded up about 60 of those 20-round magazines; we're not going to have much time to reload. After, I pre-positioned them, in lots of 20 or so.

"I'm ready, let'r rip, kid."

"Only when we're ready, Dad."

"What's to do?"

"Got lots of IEDs to plant, Dad. What kind of ANFO should we use?"

"Do what Tim McVeigh did, use fertilizer mixed with nitromethane, also called Kinepak. Nitromethane is racing fuel; you should be able to find it in and around Tucson. ANFO is composed of approximately 94.3% AN and 5.7% FO by weight."

"Gottcha."

As I understood the plan, they'd pack culverts with ANFO and detonate the culverts with the 155mm shells which had been detonated by the M183 satchel charge. They'd blow up the front and rear vehicles, boxing in the others. I guess Derek had read some of my stories.

I was surprised to learn that Derek didn't want to drop the sides of all these attack sites to block the roads. I guess that he wanted to keep the roads easily repairable for some reason. Who knows, sometimes I think that the only one who knows what's in that kid's mind is him.

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We did decide to close down a half of a mile of road. Even with all the Claymores we set, there would be very little overlap between them. It would be a curtain of death for anyone caught inside.

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"Everything ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you get all the charges set? This is a fairly popular stretch of road."

"Just like the Iraqis taught me, Dad. Work a bit at a time, in the dead of night. Take your time setting up. Just don't leave much that's different. The eye notices changes."

"You're sneaky."

"I learned from the best, Dad."

"Ok, so are we ready?"

"Section 1."

"Set."

"Section 2."

"Set."

"Lead section set. Dad, we're ready. Do you want to clack off on them, or shall I? Remember that you don't get to come on one of these ambushes again."

"Oh. My turn. Say when."

"That's what I thought. All sections stand by."

Derek wouldn't let me stick my head up. I wanted to watch, but he insisted that only one head should be up.

"Now, Dad."

I flipped the safety down and clicked the detonator three times, just like he showed me. On the first squeeze, the world turned upside down. Jeez, that was loud! Not even the ear plugs seemed to help.

"Execute."

I stuck my head up and aimed my rocket launcher at the biggest chunk left. One squeeze sent a 66mm rocket at it, smashing it into smaller pieces. Around me, all of Derek's guys were doing the same thing or raking anything that moved with .50 caliber machine guns. He had to yell "Ceasefire!" three times before everyone stopped shooting.

Derek checked the 'kill zone' with his binoculars and nodded. "Displace. Rally at north cache."

Derek had to help me move back to the HMMWV. Everyone else was running like crazy for the trucks.

"Am I slowing you down?"

"Nope. They won't drive away until they call in to me. No one gets left behind, even if they get killed."

"Now I know why you wanted me to stay behind. This displacing is for the birds. They're all dead, right?"

"Méxicans' have helicopters. I don't want to be here if they show up."

"Oh. What kind?"

"Hind-E (Mi-24V). We spotted a pair a week ago. Can you ask me this once we are on the road, Dad?"

"Sure."

I remembered all those little things Derek was fond of talking about when his mind wandered back towards tanks. One of those little things was about Russian attack helicopters. They were the only things that I think he was afraid of when inside his tank.

The Hind helicopter was designed to be a flying tank (the Russian nickname for it is actually Flying Tank). The only real difference between it and a ground tank is that it flies. It has good armor, carries a butt load of ordnance, and can attack from a good ways off. When tanks see them, they can only freeze and hope that they can point the big gun at them because even the .50 cal will bounce off. If they can call for air support, they do.

Derek might have his tank, but if those Hinds showed up we were in a lot of trouble. I could see it in his eyes, we were screwed.

"Say, did you happen to get some Stingers when you went to Huachuca?"

"Yeah, but I never fired one. Neither has anyone we have. We'd be guessing."

"I know how."

"Bully for you. Can you hit anything with one?"

"Damn right I can. I read the manual."

"But have you even fired one?"

"No. They don't sell them at Ace Hardware."

"Great. So we don't have anyone who can fire them."

"No, we don't have anyone who has fired them. I can fire one if I have to."

"Let's hope that you don't. Those things are pretty heavy, Dad. Besides, I would rather break out the Bradley's. That Bushmaster will elevate to 65°."

"Won't that tell them that we have Bradley's?"

"Yeah, but if the choice is between revealing the Bradley's and getting killed, what would you pick?"

"Shoot the SOBs down."

"I thought so. Hop in, Dad, we got to go."

I thought I had the Army FM (FM 44-18) on the Stinger, I didn't. I figured if we could teach the Mujahedeen to shoot them, we had enough talent we could get them assembled and learn to aim them. I did have part of the manual, in document form (Stinger FM Excerpt.doc), I just didn't realize it at the time. It was in the subdirectory titled Field Manuals and was the sole document file. I went looking that night and found it, printing out what I had. At least it gave them a fighting chance, provided they wanted to take it.

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"Hey Bill."

"Yes, sir."

"Knock that off, Bill, I've known you since we were both enlisted men."

"Roger, sir."

"Can you get an Avenger up and going?"

"Do we have the -20?"

"I don't know. Let me ask Dad."

"Hey Dad."

"Yeah?"

"Can you reach into your magical hat and pull out a -20 for an Avenger?"

"Depends. What's a -20? In English this time."

"It's a repair manual for an Avenger system."

"What's an Avenger system?"

"A HMMWV with Stinger missiles and an anti-aircraft gun."

"I've got chapter 2 of Field Manual 44-18."

"Not what I need. Can you take a peek around for me?"

"Don't you still have AKO access?"

"If it's still up, I should, but the Army would know that I was around."

"So let them know. I'm sure Obama is interested."

"What do I tell them when they ask why I didn't report in?"

"Tell them you were captured."

"They would want to give me a medal for it."

"So? It's about time you got a metal for something."

"I don't deserve the medal, Dad."

"Son, if it's the medal I think you're talking about, they give that to missing soldiers, too."

"Yeah, but..."

"As far as the Army is concerned, you've been missing for over a year."

"And if they want to order me back into service?"

"You can't get there from here. You lost a leg or something. Come on, kid, think. You're smart. You got that from me, didn't you? I gave you the smart jeans?"

"Ok Dad, I'll put on my wrangler's, then what?"

"We'll get one of our newly hired doctors to certify that you aren't fit for duty. You need an operation on your knee before you'll have proper mobility. How does that sound?"

"Might fly."

"Ok, now that we have that figured out, find a terminal and get on the military's secret internet. Don't tell me they don't have one, Dubya had a line item back in '05 or '06."

"Nobody is supposed to know about that; I'm sorry, but I can't even confirm it exists."

"I don't care if it exists or not as long as you can access it with that fancy ID card of yours."

"Maybe, assuming it actually did exist and hadn't been brought down by the war."

"Bull hockey, Obama would make that his number one priority simply because he's the Commander in Chief."

"I'll see what I can do. No promises, Dad."

"Whatever, I don't give a rat's behind about that secret stuff anyway and haven't since '65."

"It ain't the secret stuff, Dad. Obama's secrets can go to hell for all I care. All military websites are monitored. The more I learn from them, the more likely they are to learn where we are."

"Good, you can connect from Luke AFB, all that will tell them is the state."

"Or I could try a trick I know from the local recruiting station. All I need is a CAC jack."

"What's a CAC jack?"

"The slot that you plug your fancy ID card into. I can bounce the signal through a couple of calling center switchboards and they will be chasing me all over Omaha. So long as I have a CAC jack and time, I think that I can pull it off."

"Well, why didn't you say so?"

"I just thought of it, Dad. I have some of Mom in me too, you know."

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"Please enter your password."

"*****"

"Please re-enter your password."

"*****"

"Are you sure that you wish to proceed?"

"Yes"

"Where are you currently located?"

Chit. That's what I was afraid of. Well, here goes nothing.

"Camp Ashland."

"Welcome to Army Knowledge Online."

I let out the breath I had been holding for a while. It worked! I quickly accessed the online publications website and ordered the computer to download every TM, FM, DA PAM, TB, and SOUM they had.

"Please wait. This may take a few minutes. Estimated download size 168.356 GB. Download speed 17.6 Mb/second." At that rate, the connection would have to last more than 17.4 hours.

"Crap. I'm gonna have Dad's funeral before I get this download."

"Easy, Spence. Go have a smoke."

"We're going to have to pull the hard drive when we finish. Wait. Did I remember to shut off the screensaver?"

"YES! Go smoke!"

I grinned. "You coming, Bill?"

"Does a bear crap in the woods?"

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"Download complete."

"Finally! Shut this thing down and pull the hard drive."

I went outside to catch a breath of fresh air. The wind blew bitterly out of the west. Winter was coming early this year. I bet Dad was having a fit over his harvest, which wasn't half done yesterday when I left.

The wind brought something else in. Faintly, I could hear rotors.

"Chit! Hurry up, Bill, we got to go!"

"I just got the wires off, Spence. I don't have it open yet."

"Never mind. Just take the whole thing. Move!"

Bill grabbed the computer and we headed out the back to where the pickup was parked. We had deliberately come in a civilian vehicle to keep a lower profile. Hopefully it would work because the rotors were getting louder and I could see 2 black dots coming in from the west.

"You see them?"

"Yeah. Sounds like Russian make."

"How can you tell?"

"I can tell."

"So we go to ground. Let's get across the street and under cover."

"What are you thinking?"

"West means Méxican, so it means that they're just doing a patrol. If we can catch them on the ground, we smash them. Otherwise, we wait until they go away."

"Why even bother hitting them if they land?"

"I want everything east of those ambush sites considered no-man's land."

"But helicopters? We're not talking about some supply convoy or patrol; we're talking about the apple of some generalissimo's eye!"

"All the more reason to hit them, Bill. It takes a while to train a chopper pilot, and not even all pilots can learn how to fly one. Plus, Russia only made so many and sold so many of them."

"Aye aye, sir."

Now I knew that I had irritated him. He was going back into Marine Corps mode. We could see the choppers plainly now.

"Ka-50's?"

"Looks like, they have straight wings and no tail rotors."

"My, my, my. I hope they land. They'll make a big boom."

Sure enough, the pair of them set down one at a time in the Safeway parking lot. Once the rotors spooled down, the crews popped the canopies and headed for the liquor store next door to the main grocery.

"José is after some Cuervo," muttered Bill.

I nodded. Moving slowly, I got out my M1A Loaded. Dad bought it for me a while back so that I would quit "borrowing" his. Bill eased his Lee-Enfield forward and drew a bead on one of the rear Mexicans. The chopper wasn't a Ka-50 but a Ka-52.

"Identified."

"Fire and adjust." Even after years off of tanks we both used the same crew fire commands to talk to each other. Both rifles barked, and two of the pilots dropped. The other two whipped around in short order, bringing their pistola's up. A heartbeat later Bill shot his second man. My second dropped a hair later.

"Alright. Make sure that they're dead. I'll prep the choppers."

Bill leveled the Lee-Enfield again and fired four times. "They're dead," he announced.

"Dammit, I meant go up there and poke 'em, not shoot 'em again!"

"Each one has a .303 in his head now. Either he's dead or he has one massive headache."

"For that, no booze for you."

"You say." Bill was already moving towards the liquor store.

It took me almost twenty minutes to move four bodies back into their cockpits and toss in the thermite grenades. Strangely enough, that's how long it took Bill to load up several cases of Glen Fidditch from the abandoned store.

"You still drinking that rotgut?"

"You are, too."

"Oh, really?"

"Yep. I found a case of Drambuie."

"In that case, I guess I am."

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"Didn't your momma teach you not to drink and drive?"

"He's drinking, I'm driving."

"Yeah right and when one of you gets a snoot full, you trade off."

"Dad, it was only about 45 miles from the recruiting station in Tucson."

"Glenfiddich, that's some awful chit. I drank it once at \$5 a shot. I'm more of a blended scotch fan than a single malt fan. I don't suppose you found any Chivas?"

"Even if we had, we wouldn't have brought it, no reason for you to break your sobriety."

"Everyone worries about my sobriety except me. Hell, I wouldn't take it if you offered; thanks anyway."

"Where was the liquor store?"

"Tucson. Right next to two blown up Mexican choppers."

"How did they get that way?"

"Do you know what a thermite grenade is?"

"Yeah they burn."

"So did the choppers."

"What kind were they?"

"Ka-52s Hokum Bs."

"Never heard of them. One of Russia's late exports?"

"Yeah. Worse than the Hind."

"What about that Havoc they had?"

"If the Méxican have Hokum's, they have Havoc's. They probably even have a few old Hind's."

"How many?"

"A few hundred Hind's, maybe 100 Havoc's and 2 less Hokum's."

"Didn't see any Bombay Sapphire Gin, did you?"

"Well, did you Bill?"

"Yeah, but I don't drink that chit."

"Derek did your mother have any kid's besides your brother, that lived?"

"Yeah Dad, but I learned from one of the best. What about the harvest?"

"I hope you like spuds and green beans, we got plenty of those. Some of the remainder of the vegetables came in, but in smaller quantities. We got enough wheat to produce a few tons of flour, but it will have to be whole grain. That rice was a bitch to grow. If I didn't like it so much, I don't think I'd have bothered. Now, the tomato crop was mighty good, especially the Roma's. Gonna have a bunch of spaghetti sauce."

"What about the meat?"

"All we got is beef, pork and chicken. You want fish, get a pole."

"Fruit?"

"Real fruit of the PRK kind?"

"Real fruit, you know, apples, peaches, lemons."

"Wait a minute, that's two different kinds of fruit, citrus and pomes. Which do you mean?"

Whetstone – Chapter 19

"Both."

"We've got apples, pears and peaches. We also have oranges, lemon and grapefruit."

"No strawberries?"

"I ate them."

"I guess we're even for the Bombay Sapphire then."

"We would be if you weren't telling the truth and I wasn't lying. Anyway, what's the deal with the Russian helicopters?"

"We're trying to create a 'No Man's Land' east of Tucson."

"And?"

"We downloaded the publications we needed from a computer in a recruiter's office. It was near a Safeway store. Two KA-52s flew in and landed. Bill and I killed the pilots and I detonated thermite grenades in them to destroy them. They can't have many of those Hokum's, like I said."

"My manual wasn't good enough for you?"

"We needed the Tech Manuals, specifically the repair manuals. Sorry, Dad, but your effort is appreciated."

"When are we going to go out and blow up another bunch of the Latin troops?"

"I told, you, that was your last trip."

"That's not fair. Hell, at least you could have brought me one bottle as a consolation prize."

"But you ate the strawberries."

"I was lying. But you didn't bring me any booze and you were telling the truth. I'll forgive you someday, can't say when. Won't be more than 3-4 years, after that, I tend to forget why I had the grudge."

I suppose I didn't mind being pushed aside, it looked like we had a war going and war is a young man's game. What's more, whether I wanted them or not, I had responsibilities. Let me tell you a little about our neighbors, the city of Benson:

Benson is a city in Cochise County, 45 miles east-southeast of Tucson. According to 2006 Census Bureau estimates, the population of the city is 4,934. The city was founded in 1880 when the Southern Pacific Railroad came through. It was named after Judge William B. Benson, a friend of the President of the railroad. The city is perhaps best known as the gateway to Kartchner Caverns State Park.

Benson is located at 31° 57' 10" N, 110° 18' 24" W (31.95288, -110.30677). According to the Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 92.5 km² (35.7 mi²), none of which is covered by water. As of the census of 2000, there were 4,711 people, 2,084 households, and 1,346 families residing in the city. The population density was 50.9/km² (131.9/mi²). There were 2,822 housing units at an average density of 30.5/km² (79.0/mi²).

The racial makeup of the city was 89.32% White, 19.85% Hispanic or Latino (of any race), 1.29% Native American, 0.72% Black or African American, 0.47% Asian, and 0.13% Pacific Islander. 5.69% were from other races, and 2.38% from two or more races. There were 2,084 households out of which 18.9% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 51.5% were married couples living together, 9.2% had a female householder with no husband present, and 35.4% were non-families. 30.0% of all households were made up of individuals and 17.4% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.22 and the average family size was 2.72.

That was before the war. The 2010 census was never tabulated and between the disease and the war, the population was seriously reduced. When you only start with ~5,000, any reduction was noticed. Which, by the way my mind works, brings me to another subject, the trust fund. We stopped taking income from the trust when we won the lottery. Matt said that would allow the trust fund to grow by leaps and bounds.

I told him that I didn't like the looks of things and suggested, rather timidly, that they get very conservative with the investments. For all I cared, the bank could eliminate all non-Iowa investments and keep the money local. I told him that we didn't want the trust to disappear, just because the market collapsed. He listened, although I don't know that he agreed with me.

That was during the period associated with the first terrorist attacks. For a long time, we didn't associate the plagues with a second set of terrorist attacks and ultimately, the third world war made the mission of those submarine delivered terrorists moot. We had gone full circle and we back to fighting the Latin Americans. Well, Derek and his friends were, I was busy being a banker.

"Son, I need to put together a small convoy."

"What for?"

"I want to go to Charles City and clean out the trust fund."

"You can't do that Dad; they won't give up the money until you're dead."

"When my father wrote his will, I doubt he believed that we'd have WW III. Besides, I'm taking Damon and Sharon with me and you can give Sharon Power of Attorney to represent your interests."

"I can give you 2 HMMWVs with 50s for an escort, if you insist."

"I insist. When I get to Charles City, I'm going to be even more insistent. If I thought it would do any good, we'd go to Sacramento and insist they cough up the money they owe us."

"Is Sacramento still there?"

"Probably what's left of it, but we won't risk it, I serious doubt it would be worth the trip. We're going to need a fuel hauler."

"I think I'd better assign a HMMWV with an Mk19, while I'm at it."

"We're going to locate some travel trailers and pull them; I doubt many motels will be open."

"Now Dad, I really wish you wouldn't do this, the money isn't worth the risk."

"Maybe not, but it's my money and eventually, your money. I want to get it, if we can, and add it to our reserves."

"How are we doing financially?"

"All things considered, outstanding. Putting that gold and silver into circulation, was the best idea that Jerry ever had. With me setting the fixed exchange rates at \$30 an ounce for silver and \$1,500 an ounce for gold, we basically doubled the value of our holdings. As far as our separate earnings, we're making about 15% in our funds."

"Once we have all the caches emptied and secured here, we'll have everything we need to fight a small war. I don't want that Dad, that's why we're trying to create the No Man's Land east of Tucson."

"Just keep at it; I have a feeling that we haven't seen the last of it."

"When do you want to leave?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"I'd better get busy then, we have to service the vehicles, locate the travel trailers and get them ready for the road."

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I suggested that Derek simply locate the trailers and rent them from the owner's if they could be located. Otherwise, salvage them and make sure the tires were good, etc. We'd be taking a total of 6 vehicles, 2 pickups, 3 HMMWVs and the fuel hauler. I figured we could pull 5 trailers and that should provide sleeping accommodations for as many as 20 people, maybe more. Mary said she was coming along to drive the fuel hauler; Derek had given his power of attorney to her.

Shortly after moving to Whetstone, I went to MSN Maps and Directions and got a route for the shortest trips from Whetstone to Charles City.

Total Distance: 1484.6 Miles

Estimated Total Time: 24 hours, 35 minutes

- 1: Take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10 towards I-10
- 2: At exit 303, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10 Bus [SR-80] towards I-10-BL/AZ-80/Benson/Douglas
- 3: Turn LEFT (North) onto I-10 Bus [SR-76]
- 4: Keep RIGHT onto Local road(s) towards I-10
- 5: Take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10
- 6: At exit 322, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10 towards Johnson Rd
- 7: Bridge work near Willcox
- 8: At exit 355, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10 towards US-191/Safford
- 9: Entering New Mexico
- 10: At exit 22, take Ramp (LEFT) onto I-10 towards US-70/NM-90/Main St./ Silver City
- 11: At exit 135, turn RIGHT onto Ramp towards US-70/Las Cruces/Alamogordo
- 12: Take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-10 Bus [US-70]
- 13: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-70 [W Picacho Ave]
- 14: Turn LEFT (North) onto US-70 [US-82]
- 15: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-54 [US-70]
- 16: Reconstruction between Duran and Corona
- 17: Take Local road(s) (RIGHT) onto US-285 [US-54]
- 18: Turn LEFT (North-East) onto US-54 [US-60]
- 19: Take Local road(s) (RIGHT) onto I-40 Bus [US-54]
- 20: Take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-40 [US-84] towards I-40
- 21: Reconstruction between Newkirk and Tucumcari
- 22: At exit 329, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-40 Bus [US-54] towards I-40-BL/US-54/Tucumcari Boulevard
- 23: Turn LEFT (North) onto SR-104 [S 1st St]
- 24: Turn RIGHT (East) onto E Maple Ave
- 25: Turn LEFT (East) onto US-54
- 26: Entering Texas

- 27: Turn LEFT (North) onto US-54 [Denver Ave]
- 28: Entering Oklahoma
- 29: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-412 [US-54]
- 30: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-54
- 31: Entering Kansas
- 32: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-160 [US-54]
- 33: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-54
- 34: Keep STRAIGHT onto US-400 [US-54]
- 35: Keep STRAIGHT onto Ramp towards I-35/Kansas Turnpike/Oklahoma City/ Kansas City
- 36: Keep STRAIGHT to stay on Ramp
- 37: *Toll road* Merge onto I-35 [Kansas Turnpike]
- 38: At exit 127, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-35 towards I-35 / US-50 / Emporia / Ottawa
- 39: At exit 231A, turn LEFT onto Ramp towards I-635
- 40: Take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-35 towards I-35
- 41: Entering Missouri
- 42: At exit 2U, turn RIGHT onto Ramp towards I-670/I-70/Broadway/Topeka/St Louis
- 43: Keep RIGHT to stay on Ramp towards I-70/Broadway/St Louis
- 44: Take Ramp (LEFT) onto I-670 [I-70 Alt] towards I-70/St Louis
- 45: At exit 2N, take Ramp (LEFT) onto I-70 [US-40] towards I-29/I-35/US-71/St Joseph/Des Moines
- 46: Take US-71 (RIGHT) onto I-35 [US-71] towards I-35/US-71/I-29 N/St Joseph/Des Moines
- 47: Road name changes to I-29 [I-35]
- 48: Keep RIGHT onto I-35 towards I-35/Des Moines
- 49: At exit 92, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-35 towards US-136/Bethany/Princeton
- 50: Entering Iowa
- 51: At exit 72A, take Ramp (RIGHT) onto I-235 towards I-235/West Des Moines/Des Moines
- 52: Construction near Des Moines
- 53: Road name changes to I-35
- 54: Stay on I-35
- 55: At exit 190, turn RIGHT onto Ramp towards US-18/Mason City/Charles City
- 56: Road name changes to US-18 [SR-27]
- 57: Turn LEFT (East) onto Local road(s)

I didn't plan to follow the map laid out exactly; we'd skirt any population centers. After we hit Iowa, I wouldn't really need the map, but had it just in case. Aaron continued his role and drove Sharon and me in our pickup with Damon bringing his pickup and extra stores. The time that MSN gives assume an average speed of 60mph. If we were going an average speed of 45mph, we were doing well.

Our convoy was arranged as follows:

1. HMMWV w/M2
2. Our pickup

3. HMMWV w/Mk-19
4. Fuel hauler
5. Damon's pickup
6. HMMWV w/M2

The various areas of reconstruction cited were back in 2007-08. They wouldn't be accurate, but no doubt we'd find other areas of construction, especially as we got further north. Our greatest concern was any bridges/overpasses that might be out. Because of that, we had a very good road atlas, 2010 edition (free).

I sat in the back seat, my various firearms surrounding me. I couldn't help but think of the reaction we'd get when we pulled into the bank in Charles City and filled their parking lot with armed military vehicles. Floyd County, Iowa is very conservative, and that even goes for the Democrats.

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"Can I help you?"

"Gary Ott to see Matt."

"Do you really need those guns? What is this, a holdup?"

"Different times call for different rules."

"Gary, good to see you."

"You may not think so after you hear why I've come."

"Let me guess, you want the balance of the trust fund in cash, right?"

"I have Sharon and Damon with me and Derek's wife Mary has his power of attorney. I don't think Dad planned on the world ending."

"We did. Shortly after the outbreak of those plagues, we cashed out all of your securities and converted it to gold and silver. With the price of gold and silver what it is now, the trust has appreciated significantly. I presume you want the balance?"

"Yes, please. Down in Arizona, I've pretty much become the local banker because we converted half of our lottery winnings into gold and silver. We only got 5 payments from the Lottery before they went belly up and I rather doubt they'll make any more payments."

"That's quite the convoy you have, where did you get military vehicles?"

"Derek is a Lieutenant now; I guess you'd have to say that we have our own small Army."

"What's it like down there?"

"They're working to keep a No Man's Land east of Tucson. We have quite a bit of military matériel. How much did you have to pay for the gold?"

"Around \$900 an ounce, but some of it is in silver. The carts are here now."

"Only 6 carts?"

"We mostly bought gold. You know the ratio between the price of gold and silver is about 50:1, right?"

"That's what we use. Did you get all of your fees?"

"Yes, which vehicle do you want the bullion loaded into?"

"Damon's pickup has the smallest load, put it in the back of that."

"How long did it take you to get here?"

"About 34 hours of driving time. We didn't have any trouble getting here, but I'm not so sure about going back."

"You shouldn't have any trouble; your convoy won't look any different."

"With my luck, we'll get attacked before we leave Floyd County."

"If you want, I'll get you a Sheriff's escort."

"No thanks that would just attract more attention."

"Say, I just remembered, do you want to close your checking and savings accounts?"

"Probably should. Can I get that in gold or silver?"

"At the current exchange rate, yes."

"What is the current exchange rate?"

"\$1,200/\$24."

"Could I get it all in silver?"

"How about half and half?"

"Sure, why not."

Our account balances were close to \$50,000. We took 21 ounces of gold and the balance in silver, 1,035 ounces, all in one ounce coins, ~86.25 pounds. In addition to that, we had 361 ounces of gold and 18,505 ounces of silver from the trust. Damon's truck would almost be on the frame, we had slightly over 875 pounds of silver and almost 32 pounds of gold. The bank had taken a fee of 0.9% per year for managing the gold and silver. When we left the bank, we headed back the way we came, I wanted to get as far as I could from Charles City, only they knew we were transporting 900 pounds of gold and silver. We stopped for the night at a rest stop south of Des Moines on I-35. That night we transferred the metal from his pickup to the 5 trailers. The remainder of the trip back to Whetstone was uneventful.

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"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"Did you get the money from the bank?"

"All in gold and silver, Derek. They converted it when gold was at \$900 an ounce and silver was \$18 an ounce. We have 382 ounces of gold and 19,540 ounces of silver. At our exchange rates, that's equal to \$966,000."

"What now?"

"We're going to divide the trust 3 ways and dissolve the trust. Sharon and I will take care of Lorrie and Amy out of Sharon's share."

"That doesn't seem right."

"I agree, but that how my father wanted it. We don't really need the money, so I'm sure Sharon will split her share evenly between Amy and Lorrie."

If you're interested in the numbers, the boys would each get \$322,000 and the girls each get \$161,000. A more fair distribution would have been to give each of the 4 of them \$241,500. We had talked it over on the way back from Iowa and had decided we'd even it out with our money, giving each of the girls \$161,000 and then divide the estate 4 ways. In the end, they'd all get the same, provided I didn't get po'd."

The kids got together and said that they wanted to merge their money with ours, especially since we were earning ~15% a year. We then explained how we intended to even things out. They suggested that we figure it all out in Microsoft Money and set it up that

way now. That way, when it came time to divide up, each share would be reflected in the 'books'. That made it easy; we merged all of the money and showed 4 equal shares of the 'capital' of the 'company'. It was, and would remain, a proprietorship.

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I thought it would be dangerous to keep any of the gold and silver in the house, thus it ended up stored in the armory. The armory had emptied out a little when I finally gave the remaining Mauser's to residents in Benson. I had the ammo priced at 30¢ a round or \$250 a case. Considering what I'd paid for it, I get most, if not all, of my money back on the rifles. 250 cases at \$250 each equaled more than I had invested, and the early ammo sales went at 25¢ a round, \$225 a case.

A few folks thought I was getting rich on the misery of others. 'Tough, you could have prepared ahead, like I did,' was my usual response. Besides, Adam Smith had it right when he discussed economics. There was the law of supply and demand:

One of the main points of *The Wealth of Nations* is that the free market, while appearing chaotic and unrestrained, is actually guided to produce the right amount and variety of goods by a so-called "invisible hand" (an image that Smith had previously employed in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, but which has its original use in his essay, "The History of Astronomy"). If a product shortage occurs, for instance, its price rises, creating a profit margin that creates an incentive for others to enter production, eventually curing the shortage. If too many producers enter the market, the increased competition among manufacturers and increased supply would lower the price of the product to its production cost, the "natural price". Even as profits are zeroed out at the "natural price," there would be incentives to produce goods and services, as all costs of production, including compensation for the owner's labor, are also built into the price of the goods. If prices dip below a zero profit, producers would drop out of the market; if they were above a zero profit, producers would enter the market. Smith believed that while human motives are often selfish and greedy, the competition in the free market would tend to benefit society as a whole by keeping prices low, while still building in an incentive for a wide variety of goods and services.

In microeconomic theory the partial equilibrium supply and demand economic model originally developed by Alfred Marshall attempts to describe, explain, and predict the price and quantity of goods sold in competitive markets. It is one of the most fundamental models, widely used as a basic building block in a wide range of more detailed economic models and theories. The theory of supply and demand is important in the functioning of a market economy in that it explains the mechanism by which many resource allocation decisions are made. However, unlike general equilibrium models, supply schedules in this partial equilibrium model are fixed, as the long run reciprocal relationship between demand and supply is ignored.

Marshall's theory of supply and demand runs counter to the ideas of economists from Adam Smith and David Ricardo through the creation of the marginalist school of

thought. Although Marshall's theories are dominant in universities today, other economists have disagreed with it. One theory counter to Marshall is that price is already known in a commodity before it reaches the market, negating his idea that some abstract market is conveying price information. The only thing the market communicates is whether or not an object is exchangeable or not (in which case it would change from an object to a commodity). This would mean that the producer creates the goods without already having customers – blindly producing, hoping that someone will buy them ("buy" meaning exchange money for the commodities). Modern producers often have market studies prepared well in advance of production decisions; however, misallocation of factors of production can still occur.

Keynesian economics also runs counter to the theory of supply and demand. In Keynesian theory, prices can become "sticky" or resistant to change, especially in the case of price decreases. This leads to a market failure. Modern supporters of Keynes, such as Paul Krugman, have noted this in recent history, such as when the Boston housing market dried up in the early 1990s, with neither buyers nor sellers willing to exchange at the price equilibrium.

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Stick around a while, there's a lot I still need to teach you about the big, bad world. Life is a learning experience. ~20 years of life's experiences are equal to a 4-year college education. Thus a Master's degree is equal to ~25 years of life and a PhD to about 40-years of living. All schooling really does for you is offer you other people's life experiences, condensed, like the soup, only much more condensed. It still takes actual experience to put those lessons to use. I know from personal experience that you can't directly apply the book learning; it's only a tool to help direct you. One of the most important things a person can learn in a school is how to think.

Besides, with Derek helping on this tome, you get a little current military thinking to add to my less than spectacular military education. Damn, can that boy shoot. Back in '06, when they came to visit for Christmas, we took my new rifle to a range. We first set up a target at 50 yards and ran 60 rounds through the rifle. Then we set the target at 100 yards and ran another 30 rounds through it. Finally I shot my last 10 at a steel plate at 100 yards. The first shot was low, the next 9 hit the plate. Derek fired 5 more rounds, 3 at a 200 yard steel plate and 2 at a 400 yard steel plate, all hits. The range master had joined us and he shot the M1A in competition. He gave Derek the sight adjustment for 400 yards... 6 clicks I think.

I don't know why Mary was shooting left handed, but she shouldn't have, she could barely hit the target. Our ammo was some of the South African surplus, I wish I had bought more.

Whetstone – Chapter 20

“What don't tell me YOU missed the program! It was on TV on December 31, 2006. Jeez, you mean to tell me YOU missed it? No kidding, sorry, I didn't. The name of the show was *Last Days on Earth*. WW III was choice number 3, a pandemic was choice number 2. Behind door number 1 was Global Climate Change. And, you know who says so? Your pal, Al Gore. Several scientists agreed with him. Well, if Al says so, it must be the truth, he invented the Internet.”

Could the human race become suddenly extinct? We count down seven ways in which the world as we know it could meet an abrupt and untimely end, from a mammoth asteroid strike to the eruption of a super volcano. What would happen as computers literally become trillions of times smarter than we are – would they program our mass murder? Scientists, experts, and witnesses describe these and other vividly pictured disaster scenarios, from super bugs created in secret labs to black holes that could suck earth into oblivion. Using state-of-the-art computer-generated graphics and interviews with the world's top scientists, we will leave viewers pondering humanity's place in the universe and will reveal the most terrifying truth of all – that our greatest enemy is ourselves.

The world is coming to an end on December 21, 2012! The ancient Maya made this stunning prediction more than 2,000 years ago. Journey back to the ancient city of Chichen Itza, the hub of Maya civilization deep in the heart of México's Yucatan Peninsula, to uncover the truth about this prophecy. The Maya were legendary astronomers and timekeepers – their calendar is more accurate than our own. By tracking the stars and planets they assigned great meaning to astronomical phenomena and made extraordinary predictions based on them – many of which have come true. Could their doomsday prophecy be one of them? In insightful interviews archaeologists, astrologers, and historians speculate on the meaning of the 2012 prophecy. Their answers are as intriguing as the questions.

At 7:15AM on June 30, 1908, a giant fireball, as bright the Sun, explodes in the Siberian sky with a force a thousand times greater than the Hiroshima bomb. It decimates 1,200 square miles of forest – over half the size of Rhode Island, and was the biggest cosmic disaster in the history of civilization. What caused the apocalyptic fire in the sky? Over a hundred theories surround what is called the Tunguska event, varying from asteroids and comets to black holes and alien spaceships. Most scientists agree the Tunguska event will happen again, and next time, the human toll could be unimaginable. Now, NASA and other organizations race against time to stop the next planet killer before it ignites Armageddon.

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You really should have watched TV; it's gone now, along with the radio stations. You can still watch TV if it works and you have a player that works. Ask yourself, "How many times can I watch Star Wars before I'm sick of it?" Thought so, that few, huh? Derek

could watch it forever, especially episodes 4 through 6. We have something on the order of 200+ DVDs and 400+ VHS movies. My friend Ronald had over 1,000. That's not counting the ones they recovered. These days, who has time to watch movies?

We don't, we're really into gardening, canning and guard duty. I'm exempt from guard duty even though Derek knows how well I shoot. Still, it seems that I have guard responsibilities, I'm their fall back plan, in case the bad guys overrun us. With that in mind, even Sharon agreed to carry a pistol. I gave her a Hi-Power and told her not to hurt herself.

That takes care of the spring, summer and fall. I don't go hunting and don't eat what they bring back, I like beef. I tried venison one time after they started hunting. It was marinated and they claimed it tasted like beef. Not hardly, it tasted like marinated venison to me. It could all be in my head but it doesn't matter because I didn't have any venison in my stomach. According to the Mayan Calendar, the world ends this year (2012) on December 21st.

Winter in the Sonoran Desert after WW III, and in the middle of the Latin invasion, was about what you'd expect after WW III. It was fine until we got nuclear summer. A nuclear summer is a hypothetical scenario resulting from nuclear warfare that would follow a nuclear winter. In this scenario, the amount of water in the stratosphere would increase, causing greenhouse warming of the surface. The nuclear detonations would also produce oxides of nitrogen that would then deplete the ozone layer around the Earth. This layer screens out UV-B radiation from the Sun, which causes genetic damage to life forms on the surface. Possibilities of any existing species to survive in this extreme condition will be less. The absorption of ozone also results in a heating of the stratosphere, which results in a further contribution to greenhouse heating.

A person would expect the heat in this area during the summer. That's ok; we have heavy duty swamp coolers. The only problem was that they weren't as efficient when the relative humidity reached 50% and above. We had every fan we owned running, it was almost tolerable. One word comes to mind: sweltering.

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"How are you doing, Dad?"

"This sux."

"What sux?"

"Everything. I don't know what I imagined it would be like if we had terrorist attacks and WW III, but it sure wasn't this."

"You must have known. You prepared like you were expecting a lack of food and fuel, general disorder, chaos and radioactive fallout."

"Yes, I did; BUT I didn't really expect to have to use that stuff. It was sort of like life insurance. I thought about it and couldn't imagine what it would be like to be really hungry. I'd seen fuel crisis, like in '73, so I knew we'd have to have fuel for the vehicles and our generator. I like firearms and went crazy when I had the chance to buy them. The same thing went when it came to ammo, you can never have too much of that or toilet paper."

"I meant to ask, what's this obsession of yours about toilet paper?"

"Every use an outhouse? You know, one that used the old Wards catalog for toilet paper? I did when I was a child – it took a very long time to get over that. Since then, it's been high on my list of essentials. The outhouse is bad enough; you can't hold your breath long enough. Using something besides a decent toilet paper makes it 10 times worse."

"Some people still have outhouses."

"I know, but at least they buy toilet paper. Even that cheap commercial stuff beats using catalog paper. We have more problems than toilet paper, let me tell you."

"Like what?"

"You have a Latin Army to the west. You have Obama in charge of the country. Bad things happen in threes and we've had at least four; that means we're going to get nine. Most of the country has been destroyed and it will take years to get manufacturing reestablished, if ever. Instead of going to the grocery store to buy food, we're producing food and supplying it to the grocery store."

"Plus you haven't gotten any of the money the Lottery owes you since the war."

"Yes I have, what's the value of the military equipment you had shipped?"

"I have no idea, several million at least. What does that have to do with anything, Dad?"

"I don't care who pays us. The state of California probably invested that money in Treasury Notes. Since we can't get the money from California, we'll get it from the feds directly."

"Well, uh, if you say so..."

"I say so. California owes us a lot of money, Derek. I'm willing to take it any way we can. Don't confuse that with salvaging, unless the property you recover is actually owned by the state of California. If you feel like driving out there, you could dig around and see how much gold and silver you could find. If you can find \$40 million in gold at the market price of \$600 an ounce, I'm willing to call it even."

"But Dad, that's 66,666.7 ounces of gold, 4,555 pounds. I doubt we could find that much in the entire state."

"You might, if you went to San Francisco."

"If you're going to San Francisco – Be sure to wear some flowers..."

"No, it's down the street from there. Specifically it's on Market Street."

"What is?"

"The US Mint, San Francisco, the Granite Lady."

"I thought they closed that down."

"They did. However, it was reopened to mint proof sets."

"How far is it to Frisco?"

"San Francisco! You call it Frisco and someone will shoot you. It's about 900 miles, give or take. You'd better take a big truck; most of the proof sets are silver. A couple of those M183 satchel charges ought to get you in. Don't take any more than they owe us. On the way back, you can stop in Tehachapi and try and get enough wind turbines to power Whetstone and Benson."

"How much power will you need?"

"Do I look like Thomas Alva Edison to you? How the hell should I know? Get at least 20mw and we'll go from there. I read that they had an expansion project that wasn't scheduled to be completed until 2011-12. There should be equipment sitting there that you can load up and bring home. Get the towers and we'll figure a way to install them in concrete bases."

"Palm Springs is closer, Dad."

"Well check there after you get my money and the turbines from Tehachapi. I figure more is better and you'd better start your shopping at the most distant point."

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One advantage we had when it came to using power was Wal-Mart. They had been on a kick pushing those small florescent bulbs that screwed into regular light bulb sockets. When we lived in Kalifornia, we had 3, all in the garage. Most of the time, nobody bothers to turn off the garage lights and they made sense. Costing about 8 times as much as regular bulbs, they lasted 10 times longer. In the long run, they made economic sense. When we moved to Whetstone, we loaded up on them, replacing the regular

bulbs when they wore out. It added up and made it possible to run 5 homes on 300 amps. Then we got more people and Damon salvaged more of the bulbs.

This 4½" tall, 13 watt mini compact fluorescent light bulb saves energy, last longer and is equivalent to a 60 watt standard bulb. This bulb lasts up to 8,000 hours and will save you more than \$45.00 in electricity over the life of the bulb. Light output is 800 lumens, energy used is 13 watts, and a life of 8,000 hours. Lamps Plus had them for under \$5. Every time you turned on the light switch, you saved 47 watts of energy and it does add up.

We also got our portable generator from Costco right after we won the Lottery. They had the Onan Homesite Power 6500 on sale for \$200 off the regular price through January 31, 2007. They had none in stock and weren't giving rain checks. We got a different one, a 7kw PowerBoss with a Honda engine.

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"What did you get?"

"What did I get where?"

"I don't care San Francisco, Tehachapi and Palm Springs?"

"We collected your lottery winnings from the feds in San Francisco. We found 56 V80, 1.80 megawatt wind turbines sitting in the original packaging at Tehachapi and we didn't bother with Palm Springs."

"56 times 1.80mw will produce 100.8mw. Kid, you done good."

"Thanks Dad, but I wouldn't count my chickens before they're hatched."

"I'm not, but I can count the eggs."

"If I read the data correctly, we're going to need about 64 yards of concrete for each of the towers we put in."

"That's what, 5 truckloads?"

"Depending on the size of the truck, yes."

"You'd better get the troops digging."

"What do you want us to do with the soil?"

"Dump it along the road. We'll have an earthen mound to hide behind, if the Latino's come calling. How many of the towers do you plan to install?"

"One at a time until we generate enough electricity for both Whetstone and Benson."

"Does that include us? I'd imagine those generators could use a rest. We might get Mary's cousin to look them over and rebuild them, assuming they need it."

"I believe you'll have to let them run for a while longer, erecting the towers and installing the control system is going to take a while."

"You say each tower will produce 1.8mw?"

"Right and we have 56 of them."

"I'm not sure, but I don't believe we'll need to install all of them. Assuming that the average home uses 12kw, and that there are a total of 1,100 homes in Whetstone and 2,900 in Benson means that we only need 4,000 times 12kw or about 48mw. If you install half of the turbines, you'll have 28 times 1.8mw or 50.4mw. That ought to be enough to run the extra things like the Safeway and the hospitals."

"Dad, 26 times 64 equals 1,664 yards of concrete. Assuming 12 yards to the load, that's close to 140 loads. I'm not sure that we can find that much."

"Think positive. Say, you weren't planning on planting all of those turbines on our place, were you? We need all 80 acres just to grow beans and meat."

"Who owns that parcel next to you?"

"The state of Arizona."

"Ok, we'll appropriate as much land as we need for the turbines and put them in there. We'll have to get some of the locals to run the power lines from there into town, where we can hook into the local grid."

"How long do you figure that will take?"

"At few months, at least. It will partly depend on how much help we can get from the residents of Whetstone and Benson."

"May I suggest a strategy? Mind you, I don't know if it's a good or bad idea, but if you tell them that they'll only get lights if they help, that will put most folks in the position of volunteering. Some people won't be able to contribute physical labor, but there ought to be something for everyone to do. I'm totally useless and I end up pulling guard duty, they can too."

"Ok, we'll talk to them."

"Good, I'm going down to the shelter and beat myself to death."

"Why?"

"I should have purchased several pallet loads of that South African surplus when I had the chance."

"Why didn't you?"

"Because, by the time we had the money, the ammo was all gone."

"You have a lot of ammo, Dad."

"Yeah, and I have a lot of enemies. First there's those Latino's; second there's the US Congress, wherever they may be; and, finally, there are all the surviving liberals."

"I think you're worried about nothing. A very large share of the liberals was sitting in the major cities waiting for the government to save them. Dad, the government couldn't even save itself, let alone the people. Besides, there wasn't time to evacuate most of the cities."

"You forgot the Latino's."

"We have a tank, artillery and a fair number of vehicles plus about 6 platoons to fight them. We're going to take the war to them and not let them come here. That's why we've tried to create that no-man's land."

"If you and your troops are busy putting in the wind turbines, how do you plan to keep the no-man's land clear?"

"We'll use about 3 platoons to run patrols and the other 3 to supervise the installation."

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It seemed obvious that I wasn't needed for the moment so I went down to the shelter, that's a real pain in the butt you know, and turned on the radios. Something was bothering me, but I couldn't remember what. Finally, it occurred to me, Aaron said we'd had more than 3 disasters. I got a pad and began to write them down: invasion, terrorist bombs, 2 plagues, and WW III. Crap, if my count was right, we had 4 more to go.

On the other hand, as the local banker, I was doing just fine. We had our lottery winnings in gold and silver, the money from the Charles City bank and what we'd saved. If they had been forced to recover our money from the mint in silver, they have needed a train to haul it. We were after all, talking about nearly 2 tons of gold. Silver would have run about 150 tons. Having all that money probably made us a target for anyone who

knew about it. That consisted of the people who had gone with Derek plus the members of our family.

Realistically, 'precious metals' have no intrinsic value, they're just rare and people want them. It has to be relative. A man dying of thirst might part with an ounce of gold for a canteen of water. Does that mean that water is valuable? It might not be to the person that had lots, but even a domestic animal sometimes has value. An exclamation from the play *King Richard the Third*, by William Shakespeare; the king cries out, *A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!* after his horse is killed in battle, leaving him at the mercy of his enemies.

One couldn't flood the market with gold and silver or it would lose its value. However, a prudent man could establish a fixed value, say \$1,500 an ounce for gold and \$30 an ounce for silver and then trade it for things of 'equal value'. He could also use the gold and silver to purchase labor, at a fair rate. The real problem arose when he overvalued the metal and undervalued what he took in exchange. Everything had to maintain the proper relationship, ergo, the value of an hour of labor had to equal something that a person was willing to work an hour to acquire. Hence, seeds had an intrinsically high value because they a source of food.

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I caught the tail end of a conversation between two hams on the west coast. As near as I could tell, one was from Spokane and the other was from Yreka. Anyway, I just caught the tail end and they were talking about the quake and the water. I tried to reach each of them, to no avail. Whatever it was, I didn't like the sound of it. My mind went into overdrive. Cascadia? Did that subduction zone finally subduct? I was all over the dial trying to find other hams on the air. Surprisingly I couldn't pick up any from the west coast. Something had changed. There had always been a few on the air, regardless of the time. I'll get back to you when I find something out.

I gave up after a few hours. There just weren't many people on the air. It's a good thing you can't really die from curiosity, or I'd have been on the floor of the shelter shouting, *It's the big one Elizabeth. I'm coming to join you honey.* Didn't happen so I got in my chair and raised myself back to ground level and went into the house. I was a little hungry so I popped 2 poppers of that popcorn we got from Sam's Club. It was just under \$12 for a 50 pound bag and it was fair to middling popcorn. We only had about 5 bags left, I made a note to myself to try and grow some next year.

"You want some of this popcorn, I popped 2 poppers?"

"Sure. Where have you been?"

"Down in the shelter, Sharon, trying to get some news. I caught the back end of a conversation from a guy in Kalifornia and another in Washington. I heard quake and water,

but couldn't get any details. You know as much as I truly hate Fox News and their breaking alerts, I sort of miss them at times like this."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember back in '07 just before we won the lottery? It was a Sunday, if I remember and they had that problem in Miami with that semi. When I turned on the TV, Fox news was giving a breaking news alert. All it was was old footage and some guy speculating about the semi they'd stopped at 8am. Then a tornado warning was issued to Alabama and they had 2 breaking news alerts. Before it was over, a subway train derailed, I think in DC, and they had 3 breaking news alerts. I got so tired of the guy guessing, I changed to either the military channel or history channel."

"I remember you getting excited about something, how did it turn out?"

"The truck had a load of automotive wire, the tornado didn't touch down as far as I know and 20 people were injured in the derailment. None of those things were really breaking news. It was breaking news at 8am, not at 2pm."

"Do you miss TV?"

"No, I think the Nazi's lost WW II. We lost the war in Iraq, even though George wouldn't admit it. Plus, as far as I know, they never caught the terrorists who set off the bombs or released the plagues."

"Who started World War Three?"

"If you believe the news, we were launching on warning, so apparently the other guy. That could have been China or Russia. My money is on Russia, I never completely trusted Putin."

"But he wasn't the President of Russia when the war started."

"I believe he was running things from behind the scenes."

"Why not the Chinese? You were all the time talking about their new fighter aircraft, what was it?"

"I think the one you mean was the J-10. They were building a bunch of those and using Russian engines. Plus they were buying more of the Su-30MKK and upgrading their Su-27s."

"That's the one, the J-10."

"It was really neat, looked a lot like the Eurofighter. Some claimed it was adapted from an Israeli fighter."

"Which one?"

"China obtained the cancelled Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI) Lavi (Lion) fighter technology. The Lavi fighter development began in October 1982 under the help of the United States, and the aircraft made the first flight in December 1986. However, the US was not prepared to finance an aircraft that would compete in export market with the F-16C/D and F/A-18C/D, and a dispute arose on the final cost. The Israeli Government was unable to finance the project alone and the development program was finally cancelled in 1987. The Lavi technologies including its aerodynamic design and software for the "fly-by-wire" system were later transferred to Chengdu to help the J-10 development. With the help of the Israelis, the "Project 8610" entered full-scale development. Russia became involved in the J-10 development program by contributing its Lyulka-Saturn AL-31F turbofan engine. However, to accommodate the bigger-size AL-31F engine, Chengdu engineers had to go through a major redesign on the aircraft's rear fuselage as well as the air-inlet shape. The first flight of the aircraft, which was originally scheduled sometime in 1996, was postponed over a year."

"When did it become part of their Air Force?"

"Maybe 2003. It didn't become public until 2007. They had an A model for air-to-air and a B model for training and air-to-ground."

"And you think that Russia started WW III?"

"They had the most weapons. China hadn't built many of the DF-31A missiles, if I recall correctly. However, Russia had deployed a bunch of the Topol-M missiles. Russia could afford a first strike, you know. They could notify their population and get many of them underground. They had the shelter system to handle that, we didn't. Plus they had to do a first strike before we got enough of our ABM missiles in place. Once we had enough to intercept a first strike, it was all over for them."

"Gary, it doesn't matter who started it, we finished it."

"At what cost? Between the bombings of our cities, the plagues and WW III, I'd guess we must have lost 70% of our population. I sure wish I knew what those hams were talking about. Or, maybe I rather not know."

"What do you mean by that?"

"What if Cascadia did subduct or Yellowstone or Long Valley erupted? That would really be bad news."

Whetstone – Chapter 21

Apocalypse Soon

By Robert S. McNamara

Robert McNamara is worried. He knows how close we've come. His counsel helped the Kennedy administration avert nuclear catastrophe during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Today, he believes the United States must no longer rely on nuclear weapons as a foreign-policy tool. To do so is immoral, illegal, and dreadfully dangerous.

It is time – well past time, in my view – for the United States to cease its Cold War-style reliance on nuclear weapons as a foreign-policy tool. At the risk of appearing simplistic and provocative, I would characterize current US nuclear weapons policy as immoral, illegal, militarily unnecessary, and dreadfully dangerous. The risk of an accidental or inadvertent nuclear launch is unacceptably high. Far from reducing these risks, the Bush administration has signaled that it is committed to keeping the US nuclear arsenal as a mainstay of its military power – a commitment that is simultaneously eroding the international norms that have limited the spread of nuclear weapons and fissile materials for 50 years. Much of the current US nuclear policy has been in place since before I was secretary of defense, and it has only grown more dangerous and diplomatically destructive in the intervening years.

Today, the United States has deployed approximately 4,500 strategic, offensive nuclear warheads. Russia has roughly 3,800. The strategic forces of Britain, France, and China are considerably smaller, with 200-400 nuclear weapons in each state's arsenal. The new nuclear states of Pakistan and India have fewer than 100 weapons each. North Korea now claims to have developed nuclear weapons, and US intelligence agencies estimate that Pyongyang has enough fissile material for 2-8 bombs.

How destructive are these weapons? The average US warhead has a destructive power 20 times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Of the 8,000 active or operational US warheads, 2,000 are on hair-trigger alert, ready to be launched on 15 minutes' warning. How are these weapons to be used? The United States has never endorsed the policy of "no first use," not during my seven years as secretary or since. We have been and remain prepared to initiate the use of nuclear weapons – by the decision of one person, the President – against either a nuclear or non-nuclear enemy whenever we believe it is in our interest to do so. For decades, US nuclear forces have been sufficiently strong to absorb a first strike and then inflict "unacceptable" damage on an opponent. This has been and (so long as we face a nuclear-armed, potential adversary) must continue to be the foundation of our nuclear deterrent.

In my time as secretary of defense, the commander of the US Strategic Air Command (SAC) carried with him a secure telephone, no matter where he went, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The telephone of the commander, whose headquarters were in Omaha, Nebraska, was linked to the underground command post of the North American Defense Command, deep inside Cheyenne Mountain, in Colorado,

and to the US President, wherever he happened to be. The President always had at hand nuclear release codes in the so-called football, a briefcase carried for the President at all times by a US military officer.

The SAC commander's orders were to answer the telephone by no later than the end of the third ring. If it rang, and he was informed that a nuclear attack of enemy ballistic missiles appeared to be under way, he was allowed 2 to 3 minutes to decide whether the warning was valid (over the years, the United States has received many false warnings), and if so, how the United States should respond. He was then given approximately 10 minutes to determine what to recommend, to locate and advise the President, permit the President to discuss the situation with two or three close advisors (presumably the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), and to receive the President's decision and pass it immediately, along with the codes, to the launch sites. The President essentially had two options: He could decide to ride out the attack and defer until later any decision to launch a retaliatory strike. Or, he could order an immediate retaliatory strike, from a menu of options, thereby launching US weapons that were targeted on the opponent's military-industrial assets. Our opponents in Moscow presumably had and have similar arrangements.

The whole situation seems so bizarre as to be beyond belief. On any given day, as we go about our business, the President is prepared to make a decision within 20 minutes that could launch one of the most devastating weapons in the world. To declare war requires an act of congress, but to launch a nuclear holocaust requires 20 minutes' deliberation by the President and his advisors. But that is what we have lived with for 40 years. With very few changes, this system remains largely intact, including the "football," the President's constant companion.

I was able to change some of these dangerous policies and procedures. My colleagues and I started arms control talks; we installed safeguards to reduce the risk of unauthorized launches; we added options to the nuclear war plans so that the President did not have to choose between an all-or-nothing response, and we eliminated the vulnerable and provocative nuclear missiles in Turkey. I wish I had done more, but we were in the midst of the Cold War, and our options were limited.

The United States and our NATO allies faced a strong Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional threat. Many of the allies (and some in Washington as well) felt strongly that preserving the US option of launching a first strike was necessary for the sake of keeping the Soviets at bay. What is shocking is that today, more than a decade after the end of the Cold War; the basic US nuclear policy is unchanged. It has not adapted to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Plans and procedures have not been revised to make the United States or other countries less likely to push the button. At a minimum, we should remove all strategic nuclear weapons from "hair-trigger" alert, as others have recommended, including Gen. George Lee Butler, the last commander of SAC. That simple change would greatly reduce the risk of an accidental nuclear launch. It would also signal to other states that the United States is taking steps to end its reliance on nuclear weapons.

We pledged to work in good faith toward the eventual elimination of nuclear arsenals when we negotiated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968. In May, diplomats from more than 180 nations are meeting in New York City to review the NPT and assess whether members are living up to the agreement. The United States is focused, for understandable reasons, on persuading North Korea to rejoin the treaty and on negotiating deeper constraints on Iran's nuclear ambitions. Those states must be convinced to keep the promises they made when they originally signed the NPT – that they would not build nuclear weapons in return for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But the attention of many nations, including some potential new nuclear weapons states, is also on the United States. Keeping such large numbers of weapons, and maintaining them on hair-trigger alert, are potent signs that the United States is not seriously working toward the elimination of its arsenal and raises troubling questions as to why any other state should restrain its nuclear ambitions.

A Preview of the Apocalypse

The destructive power of nuclear weapons is well known, but given the United States' continued reliance on them, it's worth remembering the danger they present. A 2000 report by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War describes the likely effects of a single 1 megaton weapon – dozens of which are contained in the Russian and US inventories. At ground zero, the explosion creates a crater 300 feet deep and 1,200 feet in diameter. Within one second, the atmosphere itself ignites into a fireball more than a half-mile in diameter. The surface of the fireball radiates nearly three times the light and heat of a comparable area of the surface of the sun, extinguishing in seconds all life below and radiating outward at the speed of light, causing instantaneous severe burns to people within one to three miles. A blast wave of compressed air reaches a distance of three miles in about 12 seconds, flattening factories and commercial buildings. Debris carried by winds of 250 mph inflicts lethal injuries throughout the area. At least 50 percent of people in the area die immediately, prior to any injuries from radiation or the developing firestorm.

Of course, our knowledge of these effects is not entirely hypothetical. Nuclear weapons, with roughly one seventieth of the power of the 1 megaton bomb just described, were twice used by the United States in August 1945. One atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Around 80,000 people died immediately; approximately 200,000 died eventually. Later, a similar size bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On Nov. 7, 1995, the mayor of Nagasaki recalled his memory of the attack in testimony to the International Court of Justice:

Nagasaki became a city of death where not even the sound of insects could be heard. After a while, countless men, women and children began to gather for a drink of water at the banks of nearby Urakami River, their hair and clothing scorched and their burnt skin hanging off in sheets like rags. Begging for help they died one after another in the water or in heaps on the banks.... Four months after the atomic bombing, 74,000 people were

dead, and 75,000 had suffered injuries, that is, two-thirds of the city population had fallen victim to this calamity that came upon Nagasaki like a preview of the Apocalypse.

Why did so many civilians have to die? Because the civilians, who made up nearly 100 percent of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were unfortunately "co-located" with Japanese military and industrial targets. Their annihilation, though not the objective of those dropping the bombs, was an inevitable result of the choice of those targets. It is worth noting that during the Cold War, the United States reportedly had dozens of nuclear warheads targeted on Moscow alone, because it contained so many military targets and so much "industrial capacity."

Presumably, the Soviets similarly targeted many US cities. The statement that our nuclear weapons do not target populations per se was and remains totally misleading in the sense that the so-called collateral damage of large nuclear strikes would include tens of millions of innocent civilian dead.

This in a nutshell is what nuclear weapons do: They indiscriminately blast, burn, and irradiate with a speed and finality that are almost incomprehensible. This is exactly what countries like the United States and Russia, with nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert continue to threaten every minute of every day in this new 21st century.

No Way to Win

I have worked on issues relating to US and NATO nuclear strategy and war plans for more than 40 years. During that time, I have never seen a piece of paper that outlined a plan for the United States or NATO to initiate the use of nuclear weapons with any benefit for the United States or NATO. I have made this statement in front of audiences, including NATO defense ministers and senior military leaders, many times. No one has ever refuted it. To launch weapons against a nuclear-equipped opponent would be suicidal. To do so against a non-nuclear enemy would be militarily unnecessary, morally repugnant, and politically indefensible.

I reached these conclusions very soon after becoming secretary of defense. Although I believe Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson shared my view, it was impossible for any of us to make such statements publicly because they were totally contrary to established NATO policy. After leaving the Defense Department, I became President of the World Bank. During my 13-year tenure, from 1968 to 1981, I was prohibited, as an employee of an international institution, from commenting publicly on issues of US national security. After my retirement from the bank, I began to reflect on how I, with seven years' experience as secretary of defense, might contribute to an understanding of the issues with which I began my public service career.

At that time, much was being said and written regarding how the United States could, and why it should, be able to fight and win a nuclear war with the Soviets. This view implied, of course, that nuclear weapons did have military utility; that they could be used in battle with ultimate gain to whoever had the largest force or used them with the greatest

acumen. Having studied these views, I decided to go public with some information that I knew would be controversial, but that I felt was needed to inject reality into these increasingly unreal discussions about the military utility of nuclear weapons. In articles and speeches, I criticized the fundamentally flawed assumption that nuclear weapons could be used in some limited way. There is no way to effectively contain a nuclear strike – to keep it from inflicting enormous destruction on civilian life and property, and there is no guarantee against unlimited escalation once the first nuclear strike occurs. We cannot avoid the serious and unacceptable risk of nuclear war until we recognize these facts and base our military plans and policies upon this recognition. I hold these views even more strongly today than I did when I first spoke out against the nuclear dangers our policies were creating. I know from direct experience that US nuclear policy today creates unacceptable risks to other nations and to our own.

What Castro Taught Us

Among the costs of maintaining nuclear weapons is the risk – to me an unacceptable risk – of use of the weapons either by accident or as a result of misjudgment or miscalculation in times of crisis. The Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated that the United States and the Soviet Union – and indeed the rest of the world – came within a hair's breadth of nuclear disaster in October 1962.

Indeed, according to former Soviet military leaders, at the height of the crisis, Soviet forces in Cuba possessed 162 nuclear warheads, including at least 90 tactical warheads. At about the same time, Cuban President Fidel Castro asked the Soviet ambassador to Cuba to send a cable to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev stating that Castro urged him to counter a US attack with a nuclear response. Clearly, there was a high risk that in the face of a US attack, which many in the US government were prepared to recommend to President Kennedy, the Soviet forces in Cuba would have decided to use their nuclear weapons rather than lose them. Only a few years ago did we learn that the four Soviet submarines trailing the US Naval vessels near Cuba each carried torpedoes with nuclear warheads. Each of the sub commanders had the authority to launch his torpedoes. The situation was even more frightening because, as the lead commander recounted to me, the subs were out of communication with their Soviet bases, and they continued their patrols for four days after Khrushchev announced the withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba.

The lesson, if it had not been clear before, was made so at a conference on the crisis held in Havana in 1992, when we first began to learn from former Soviet officials about their preparations for nuclear war in the event of a US invasion. Near the end of that meeting, I asked Castro whether he would have recommended that Khrushchev use the weapons in the face of a US invasion, and if so, how he thought the United States would respond. "We started from the assumption that if there was an invasion of Cuba, nuclear war would erupt," Castro replied. "We were certain of that... [W]e would be forced to pay the price that we would disappear." He continued, "Would I have been ready to use nuclear weapons? Yes, I would have agreed to the use of nuclear weapons." And he added, "If Mr. McNamara or Mr. Kennedy had been in our place, and had

their country been invaded, or their country was going to be occupied ... I believe they would have used tactical nuclear weapons."

I hope that President Kennedy and I would not have behaved as Castro suggested we would have. His decision would have destroyed his country. Had we responded in a similar way the damage to the United States would have been unthinkable. But human beings are fallible. In conventional war, mistakes cost lives, sometimes thousands of lives. However, if mistakes were to affect decisions relating to the use of nuclear forces, there would be no learning curve. They would result in the destruction of nations. The indefinite combination of human fallibility and nuclear weapons carries a very high risk of nuclear catastrophe. There is no way to reduce the risk to acceptable levels, other than to first eliminate the hair-trigger alert policy and later to eliminate or nearly eliminate nuclear weapons. The United States should move immediately to institute these actions, in cooperation with Russia. That is the lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

A Dangerous Obsession

On Nov. 13, 2001, President George W. Bush announced that he had told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the United States would reduce "operationally deployed nuclear warheads" from approximately 5,300 to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade. This scaling back would approach the 1,500 to 2,200 range that Putin had proposed for Russia. However, the Bush administration's Nuclear Posture Review, mandated by the US Congress and issued in January 2002, presents quite a different story. It assumes that strategic offensive nuclear weapons in much larger numbers than 1,700 to 2,200 will be part of US military forces for the next several decades. Although the number of deployed warheads will be reduced to 3,800 in 2007 and to between 1,700 and 2,200 by 2012, the warheads and many of the launch vehicles taken off deployment will be maintained in a "responsive" reserve from which they could be moved back to the operationally deployed force. The Nuclear Posture Review received little attention from the media. But its emphasis on strategic offensive nuclear weapons deserves vigorous public scrutiny. Although any proposed reduction is welcome, it is doubtful that survivors – if there were any – of an exchange of 3,200 warheads (the US and Russian numbers projected for 2012), with a destructive power approximately 65,000 times that of the Hiroshima bomb, could detect a difference between the effects of such an exchange and one that would result from the launch of the current US and Russian forces totaling about 12,000 warheads.

In addition to projecting the deployment of large numbers of strategic nuclear weapons far into the future, the Bush administration is planning an extensive and expensive series of programs to sustain and modernize the existing nuclear force and to begin studies for new launch vehicles, as well as new warheads for all of the launch platforms. Some members of the administration have called for new nuclear weapons that could be used as bunker busters against underground shelters (such as the shelters Saddam Hussein used in Baghdad). New production facilities for fissile materials would need to be built to support the expanded force. The plans provide for integrating a national ballistic missile defense into the new triad of offensive weapons to enhance the nation's

ability to use its "power projection forces" by improving our ability to counterattack an enemy. The Bush administration also announced that it has no intention to ask congress to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and, though no decision to test has been made, the administration has ordered the national laboratories to begin research on new nuclear weapons designs and to prepare the underground test sites in Nevada for nuclear tests if necessary in the future. Clearly, the Bush administration assumes that nuclear weapons will be part of US military forces for at least the next several decades.

Good faith participation in international negotiation on nuclear disarmament – including participation in the CTBT – is a legal and political obligation of all parties to the NPT that entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. The Bush administration's nuclear program, alongside its refusal to ratify the CTBT, will be viewed, with reason, by many nations as equivalent to a US break from the treaty. It says to the non-nuclear weapons nations, "We, with the strongest conventional military force in the world, require nuclear weapons in perpetuity, but you, facing potentially well-armed opponents, are never to be allowed even one nuclear weapon."

If the United States continues its current nuclear stance, over time, substantial proliferation of nuclear weapons will almost surely follow. Some, or all, of such nations as Egypt, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Taiwan will very likely initiate nuclear weapons programs, increasing both the risk of use of the weapons and the diversion of weapons and fissile materials into the hands of rogue states or terrorists. Diplomats and intelligence agencies believe Osama bin Laden has made several attempts to acquire nuclear weapons or fissile materials. It has been widely reported that Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood, former director of Pakistan's nuclear reactor complex, met with bin Laden several times. Were al Qaeda to acquire fissile materials, especially enriched uranium, its ability to produce nuclear weapons would be great. The knowledge of how to construct a simple gun-type nuclear device, like the one we dropped on Hiroshima, is now widespread. Experts have little doubt that terrorists could construct such a primitive device if they acquired the requisite enriched uranium material. Indeed, just last summer, at a meeting of the National Academy of Sciences, former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry said, "I have never been more fearful of a nuclear detonation than now.... There is a greater than 50 percent probability of a nuclear strike on US targets within a decade." I share his fears.

A Moment of Decision

We are at a critical moment in human history – perhaps not as dramatic as that of the Cuban Missile Crisis, but a moment no less crucial. Neither the Bush administration, the congress, the American people, nor the people of other nations have debated the merits of alternative, long-range nuclear weapons policies for their countries or the world. They have not examined the military utility of the weapons; the risk of inadvertent or accidental use; the moral and legal considerations relating to the use or threat of use of the weapons; or the impact of current policies on proliferation. Such debates are long overdue. If they are held, I believe they will conclude, as have I and an increasing number of

senior military leaders, politicians, and civilian security experts: We must move promptly toward the elimination – or near elimination – of all nuclear weapons. For many, there is a strong temptation to cling to the strategies of the past 40 years. But to do so would be a serious mistake leading to unacceptable risks for all nations.

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I never cared for McNamara, he was an idiot. Imagine replacing a fine weapon like the M14 rifle with that Mattel toy gun. I can understand adopting it as a second gun, much like we did during WW II when we had the M1 Garand MBR and the M1 Carbine which provided a bit more power than the M1911. The M14 wasn't well suited for the jungle, but that didn't make it a bad rifle. Hell, he even had them destroy new in the box rifles.

The US Army's M1 Garand rifle was originally developed to chamber a lighter .276 round, but this design feature was cancelled in the early 1930s, delaying the introduction of the rifle until 1936. The M1 rifle would eventually be chambered for the same powerful .30-06 Springfield standard round used in other service weapons of the time, such as the M1903, the BAR, and the M1917/M1919 machine guns. This left the army without the lighter, handier rifle it had wanted. This, along with lessons learned during earlier wars, observations of conflicts during the 1930s, and dissatisfaction with existing submachine guns and rifles contributed to the development of the M1 Carbine.

Troops in the rear, paratroopers, or frontline troops required to carry other equipment (such as medics and engineers) had found the older full-size rifles too cumbersome, and pistols and revolvers to be insufficiently accurate or powerful. Submachine guns like the Thompson were more than sufficiently powerful for close range encounters, but lacked effective range and were not significantly less difficult to carry and maintain than the existing service rifles (such as the M1903 and Garand).

Much the same constraints applied to airborne infantry, a concept that was also under consideration at the time. Prior to the development and issue of submachine guns such as the M3 "Grease Gun", a submachine gun like the Thompson was also much more expensive than pistols and most rifles of the period. The .30-06 Garand, then entering into service in the late 1930s, was as heavy and cumbersome as the existing service rifles. It was decided that a new weapon was needed for these other roles. While the range of a pistol is about 50 yards (45 m) and the range of existing rifles was several hundred yards, the requirement for the new firearm called for a maximum range of 300 yards (275 m).

A carbine version of the standard-issue semi-automatic rifle was considered, but the .30-06 round for which the M1 Garand was chambered was found to be too powerful. The requirement was for a weapon lighter and handier than the Garand, with less recoil than the rifle, but at the same time, greater range, accuracy, and effective stopping power than the M1911A1 pistols currently in use. The M1 Carbine was intended for use by soldiers who required a more compact, lightweight defensive weapon, and for soldiers who did not utilize an infantry rifle as their primary arm.

The M1 Carbine and its reduced-power .30 Carbine cartridge was never intended to serve as a primary infantry weapon, nor was it comparable to more powerful assault rifles developed late in the war. Nevertheless, the carbine was soon issued to infantry officers, machine-gun crews, paratroopers, and other frontline soldiers. Its reputation in combat was mixed. Some infantrymen and Marines, especially those who did not use a rifle as their primary weapon, preferred the carbine over the M1 Garand because of the weapon's small size and light weight. The carbine also gained generally high praise from airborne troops who were issued the folding-stock M1A1. The carbine's exclusive use of non-corrosive primed ammunition was found to be a godsend by troops and ordnance personnel serving in the Pacific, where barrel corrosion was a significant issue, though not to the same extent in Europe, where some soldiers reported misfires attributed to bad primers.

The .30 Carbine's bullet weighs 110 grains (7.1 grams) and has a muzzle velocity of 1,900ft/s, (580 m/s) giving it 880ft-lbs of energy. In comparison, a .357 Magnum revolver fires the same weight bullet at about 1,300ft/s (396 m/s) for about 410ft-lbs of energy, though the .357 is of larger diameter, and often equipped with an expanding bullet design. Nevertheless, reports of the carbine's failure to stop enemy soldiers are well documented in individual after-action reports, postwar evaluations, and service histories of the US Army and Marine Corps.

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Where the Bombs are, 2006

By Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen

Katharine Lee Bates, the author of "America the Beautiful," could not have been referring to the expanse of the US nuclear arsenal when she penned the lyric "from sea to shining sea," but it is fitting. Though it is the smallest it has been since 1958, the US nuclear arsenal continues to sprawl across the country, with thousands of weapons deployed from the coast of Washington State to the coast of Georgia and beyond.

In total, we estimate that the United States deploys and stores nearly 10,000 nuclear weapons at 18 facilities in 12 states and six European countries. The Pentagon developed this extensive network of installations over the past six decades in order to ensure the survivability of its nuclear arsenal. Post-Cold War base closures and arms reductions led to the consolidation of weapons at the current facilities; the number of weapons and their locations will change as the Pentagon implements the June 2004 Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Plan and the "New Triad."

Pinpointing the whereabouts of all US nuclear weapons, and especially the numbers stored at specific locations, is fraught with many uncertainties due to the highly classified nature of nuclear weapons information. Declassified documents, leaks, official statements, news reports, and conversations with current and former officials provide

many clues, as do high-resolution satellite images of many of these facilities. Such images are available to anyone with a computer and internet access, thanks to Google Earth and commercial satellite imaging companies such as DigitalGlobe. This development introduces important new tools for research and advances citizen verification. The statistics contained in this article represent our best estimates, based on many years of closely following nuclear issues.

The nuclear weapons network shrank during the past decade, with the Pentagon removing nuclear weapons from three states (California, Virginia, and South Dakota) and the size of the stockpile decreasing from about 12,500 warheads to nearly 10,000. Consolidation slowed considerably compared with the period between 1992 and 1997, when the Pentagon withdrew nuclear weapons from 10 states and several European bases, and the total stockpile decreased from 18,290 to 12,500 warheads.

Approximately 62 percent of the current stockpile belongs to the Air Force and is stored at seven bases in the United States and eight bases in six European countries; the Navy stores its weapons at two submarine bases, one on each coast. None of the other services possesses nuclear weapons.

The ballistic missile submarine base at Bangor, Washington, contains nearly 24 percent of the entire stockpile, or some 2,364 warheads, the largest contingent. The Bangor installation is home to a majority (nine) of the navy's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and a large number of surplus W76 warheads that will eventually be retired and disassembled. Its counterpart on the Atlantic coast, Kings Bay Submarine Base in Georgia, is the third-largest contingent, with some 1,364 warheads. Each base stores approximately 150 nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles.

Minot Air Force Base (AFB) in North Dakota, with more than 800 bombs and cruise missiles for its B-52 bombers and more than 400 warheads for its Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile wing, has the largest number of active air force weapons. The other B-52 wing at Barksdale AFB in Louisiana has more than 900 warheads, and Whiteman AFB in Missouri has more than 130 bombs for its B-2 bombers.

The large underground facility at Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque, New Mexico, stores more than 1,900 warheads that are either part of the inactive/reserve stockpile or awaiting shipment across Interstate 40 to the Pantex Plant outside of Amarillo, Texas, for dismantlement. The 970-acre facility at Nellis AFB, Nevada, northeast of Las Vegas, performs a similar function, storing approximately 900 warheads in 75 igloos – "one of the largest stockpiles in the free world," according to the Air Force.

During the Cold War, the United States deployed a large percentage (up to one-third) of its nuclear weapons in other countries and at sea. At its peak arsenal size in the late 1960s, the United States stored weapons in 17 different countries. By the mid-1980s, there were about 14,000 weapons in 26 US states, 6,000 more at overseas US and NATO bases, and another 4,000 on ships at sea.

Whetstone – Chapter 22

The United States terminated many nuclear missions after the end of the Cold War and retired the weapons. It withdrew all of its nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991 and thousands more from Europe by 1993. The Army and Marine Corps denuclearized in the early 1990s, and in 1992 the Navy swiftly off-loaded all nuclear weapons from aircraft carriers and other surface vessels. By 1994, the navy had eliminated these ships' nuclear capability, and many Air Force, Navy, and Army bases and storage depots closed overseas as a result. Today, perhaps as many as 400 bombs remain at eight facilities in six European countries, the last remnant of a bygone era.

In sum, my best judgment is that based on current trends, a nuclear terrorist attack on the United States is more likely than not in the decade ahead. Developments in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea leave Americans more vulnerable to a nuclear 9/11 today than we were five years ago. Former Defense Secretary William Perry has said that he thinks that I underestimate the risk. In the judgment of most people in the national security community, including former Sen. Sam Nunn, the risk of a terrorist detonating a nuclear bomb on US soil is higher today than was the risk of nuclear war at the most dangerous moments in the Cold War. Reviewing the evidence, Warren Buffett, the world's most successful investor and a legendary odds maker in pricing insurance policies for unlikely but catastrophic events like earthquakes, has concluded: "It's inevitable. I don't see any way that it won't happen."

Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte and the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, testified before Congress that the threat of terrorist attack with WMD was "more likely" than an attack by any state, including Iran and North Korea. Negroponte reported, "In fact, intelligence reporting indicates that nearly 40 terrorist organizations, insurgencies, or cults have used, possessed, or expressed an interest in chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agents or weapons. Many are capable of conducting simple, small-scale attacks, such as poisonings, or using improvised chemical devices." Maples added, "Al Qaeda's stated intention to conduct an attack exceeding the destruction of 9/11 raises the possibility that future attacks may involve unconventional weapons."

The United States has considered or threatened the use of nuclear weapons on several other occasions: In response to the 1948 blockade of Berlin; in support of French forces in the northern Vietnamese town of Dien Bien Phu in 1954; in response to rioting that threatened the Lebanese government in 1958; during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962; in order to counter Soviet saber rattling after the breakdown of a UN sanctioned truce in Israel in 1973; and as an option to penetrate Libya's Tarhuna underground chemical weapons facility in 1996. But perhaps the most well-communicated US nuclear threat was made prior to the US intervention during the 1991 Gulf War.

During Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, the George H. W. Bush administration issued a formal threat of retaliation in response to chemical or biological weapons use

and also against Iraqi support of any kind of terrorist actions. During a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz on January 9, 1991, Secretary of State James Baker handed Aziz a letter from Bush and warned that, if "God forbid . . . chemical or biological weapons are used against our forces—the American people would demand revenge."

"This is not a threat," Baker continued, "but a pledge that if there is any use of such weapons, our objective would not be only the liberation of Kuwait, but also the toppling of the present regime." Baker later explained that he "purposely left the impression that the use of chemical or biological agents by Iraq would invite tactical nuclear retaliation." The letter listed three "sorts" of "unconscionable actions" by Iraq that would demand the "strongest possible response": use of chemical or biological weapons; support of any kind of terrorist action; and the destruction of Kuwait's oilfields and installations.

I suppose the hands of the Doomsday Clock are frozen in perpetuity at 3 minutes to midnight. The hands were moved from 5 minutes to 3 minutes in early '08 when the Board received reliable information that a terrorist group had acquired a WMD.

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Yes, I'm looking back and will continue to do so. Considering my age, I don't have a lot of time left. I'd like to figure it all out before I go, so my family will understand what happened. *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.* – George Santayana. You knew I'd find a way to insert that didn't you? I did only because it's true. My 69th birthday was 3/23/12. That bunk about the Mayan Calendar didn't bother me, it simply started over. Their Calendar was even more accurate than ours, or did I tell you that?

The trigger event was probably the Israeli bombing of those Middle Eastern countries. It's just lucky that Hugo didn't have any nuclear weapons. He was almost as much of a crackpot as that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. It took time for our military assets to return to the AO where the Latinos were operating. During that time, we were our own defense. That M1A3E3 was an experimental tank; nonetheless it would have been good to have 3 more so we could have a full Tank Platoon.

I strongly suggest in my notes that Israel's attack had probably led to the war, Russia had agreed to protect Iran. Had I not been forbidden to participate in the attacks Derek's group was making on the Latinos, I wouldn't have had the time to figure it all out. On that, he wouldn't budge, telling me, "You're our banker; we dare not put you in harm's way." (John Paul Jones, *I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast; for I intend to go in harm's way.* – I liked the movie, too).

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Has anyone noticed how strange the weather has been lately? After that nuclear summer event, I noticed that it cooled more than usual. We didn't get snow by any means,

but the average daytime and nighttime temps were about 6° - 8°F cooler. We could adjust, after all, we had 80 acres, plus we had a good well and could irrigate, if we had to.

The other day, I swore I felt an earthquake. Arizona doesn't get many earthquakes, that was the first one I'd felt since we'd moved. Every place seems to get an earthquake periodically, in Kalifornia, it was an hourly occurrence. Because nothing was damaged, I didn't include it the list of 9 disasters. More than 20 earthquakes with magnitudes greater than 5 have occurred in or near Arizona since 1850. All of Arizona has experienced some ground shaking. The magnitude 7.4 Sonoran earthquake of 1887, which was centered about 40 miles southeast of Douglas, caused 51 deaths in Sonora and extensive property damage throughout southeastern Arizona. Substantial damage occurred in the Yuma area as a result of the magnitude 7.1 Imperial Valley earthquake of 1940. The Flagstaff area experienced moderate damage three times during the early 1900's because of magnitude 6 earthquakes.

This felt more like a far off earthquake, maybe the San Andreas Fault? I got on the radios in the shelter and started listening to the ham net, sooner or later someone, somewhere, would mention the shaking and we could begin to narrow down where it occurred.

About the weather, frustrated with people and politicians who refuse to listen or learn, National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield ended his 34-year government career in search of a new platform for getting out his unwelcome message: Hurricane Katrina was nothing compared with the big one yet to come. They would probably have to add a new category, if he was right. There is no such category on this scale, and any mention of a Category 6 tropical cyclone is fictitious or incorrect.

According to Robert Simpson, there is no reason for a Category 6 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale because it is designed to measure the potential damage of a hurricane to man-made structures. If the speed of the hurricane is above 156 mph, then the damage to a building will be "serious no matter how well it's engineered". However, the result of new technologies in construction leads some to suggest that an increase in the number of categories is necessary.

A ham in Greeley, Colorado reported that the shaking in his area tipped over cabinets. Then I talked to a fellow in Truckee, California who said he thought Long Valley Caldera blew its top. Why would Greeley, Colorado have shaking that bad if Long Valley erupted? It wouldn't, maybe Yellowstone blew up. One Supervolcano would be worse than a nuclear war, but two? Maybe the Mayan's had it right after all. All of a sudden, I was beginning to miss cable news, they over reported everything and you were left guessing. I guess that's not totally true, sometimes the media speculated so much you couldn't sort fact from fiction.

WW I was The War to End All Wars; WW II should have been The War to End All Wars; and, WW III was, in fact, the War that Ended All Global Wars. Taken together with the Latin countries trying to invade the US and those terrorist attacks, one would have

thought it couldn't get much worse. Somebody must have po'd Mother Nature. We were experiencing falling temperatures, in contrast to global warming just 5 years before. To top it off, I was getting reports on the ham bands that either Long Valley or Yellowstone had erupted.

The following day, I hooked up with a ham in Tumwater, Washington. He told me that Cascadia had subducted the previous week and what had been left of Seattle was first hit with an earthquake followed by a major tsunami. He went on to say that several of the volcanoes in the Cascades were 'making smoke'. I could only assume that he meant that Mt. Rainer, Mt. Hood and some of the California volcanoes were involved. He was starting to give me a list when he was cut off.

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"I think we may have a problem, Derek. Get Damon and let's have a sit down meeting."

"This had better be important; I was cleaning the cages, Dad."

"Damon, just shut and listen. I talked to hams in northeastern Colorado and California and it appears that both Yellowstone and Long Valley erupted. Worse still, a Washington ham told me that Cascadia subducted causing a major earthquake in Seattle followed by a tsunami."

Derek asked, "What about the San Andreas and New Madrid Faults, will they let loose too?"

"Son, it would be just our luck if La Palma fell into the Atlantic."

"How would we know?"

"We could try and contract a ham west of the Appalachians. If it did fall in, I'd guess most of the coast is gone."

"Do it and let us know. When will we see ash from California and Wyoming?"

"When it gets here; how should I know?"

I contacted a ham in New Jersey; he said they hadn't seen any water, so it appeared that all of our problems were coming from the west and the south. That 2 million man army from South and Central America hadn't given up. They'd simply broken into smaller units and were raising Hell everywhere.

It occurred to me that this was becoming Biblical, like the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. What on earth had we done to make God so angry with us? Maybe taking down the 10 Commandments from the Courthouse wall? Taking God's name out of the Pledge of Allegiance? Maybe I should take my pal Clarence's advice and keep an eye on the sky.

Whoops, I can't do that, it's filled with ash. Perhaps God was mad because we destroyed His planet and killed about half the inhabitants.

I've lost count here, are we at 9 yet? There were 5, the Latin invasion, the terrorist attack, the pandemic (2), WW III. If Long Valley and Yellowstone let loose, that made 7. and if Cascadia subducted, that made 8. Oh no, if both the San Andreas Fault and the New Madrid Fault let loose, we'd reach 10. Three times nine equals twenty-seven. Oops, I forgot the Cascade Range, it sounded like it was going to erupt and that got us to 9 without any major earthquakes on the 2 major faults. CRAP!

God wasn't just mad at us, he must be furious. I didn't even know anyone named Noah! Well, there's Ron Noah in Charles City... We were up to our butts in something, but there weren't any alligators in Arizona. Maybe it would soon be up to our butts in volcanic ash. When I thought about that, it occurred to me that there was a thing they called 'Volcanic Winter'.

The scales of recent winters are more modest but their effects can be significant. A paper written by Ben Franklin in 1783 blamed the unusually cool summer of 1783 on volcanic dust coming from Iceland, where the eruption of Laki volcano had released enormous amounts of sulfur dioxide, resulting in the death of much of the island's livestock and a catastrophic famine which killed a quarter of the population. Temperatures in the northern hemisphere dropped by about 1°C in the year following the Laki eruption.

The 1815 eruption of Mt. Tambora, occasioned mid-summer frosts in New York State and June snowfalls in New England in what came to be known as the "Year Without a Summer" of 1816.

In 1883, the explosion of Krakatoa (Krakatau) also created volcanic winter-like conditions. The next four years after the explosion were unusually cold, and the winter of 1888 was the first time snow fell in the area. Record snowfalls were recorded worldwide.

Most recently, the 1991 explosion of Mt. Pinatubo, another stratovolcano, in the Philippines cooled global temperatures for about 2-3 years, interrupting the trend of global warming which had been evident since about 1970. So it appeared we could still be in an overall period of global warming and have cold temperatures at the same time. It gives me a 2 Vicodin headache just trying to put it all together.

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"Ok, I checked. If we have any major earthquakes, we're screwed. Nearly as I can tell, we've now had 9 disasters without a major earthquake. La Palma didn't fall into the Atlantic. If it does, or we have an earthquake ala 'the big one', bend over and kiss your butts' goodbye."

"Why?"

"It means we're in for 27. The Rule of 3s, goes from 3 to 9 to 27 to 81.

"Dad, what about the Latin War?"

"That only counts as one, sort like in 'one riot, one ranger'. The Texas Rangers currently operate as the elite investigative branch of the Texas Department of Public Safety. A Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame is located in Waco. It is part of the recreated Fort Fisher, a Ranger outpost established in 1837 along the banks of the Brazos River. Fort Fisher is now the headquarters of Ranger Company F. The museum includes exhibits tracing the history of the Rangers, including audiovisual presentations, dioramas, and paintings. There is also a library, a collection of Ranger memorabilia and gun collections. The Hall of Fame honors twenty-six exemplary Rangers."

"How much ash will we get?"

"How much ash will we get? How should I know? It could be 5' high and rising. Look on my computer at the Yellowstone.pdf file. On page 5, it shows all the tuff beds, 3 from Yellowstone and 1 from Long Valley. Lowenstern says it couldn't happen; I just hope he was there when it blew."

"That's not a nice thing to say."

"It's how I feel, if it's not nice, tough. Have any of you seen any high level clouds, that were really dark?"

"Not yet, is that what we're looking for, high level clouds?"

"I really can't answer that, Damon. Mt. St. Helens put a cloud as high as 3-5km and the ash field extended to Yakima."

"How much ash was that?"

"About 0.4km³, almost nothing compare to Long Valley and the last big eruption at Yellowstone. They were 580km³ and 1,000km³. The biggest eruption at Yellowstone was 2.1 million years ago and it ejected 2,450km³."

"Who is this Lowenstern?"

"Some guy with the USGS who said we probably wouldn't get another large eruption of Yellowstone."

"I saw him on TV when they showed *Supervolcano*."

"You probably did, Damon. I doubt he's a Muslim with a name like Lowenstern. He's the Scientist in Charge of Yellowstone."

"So was it a hydrothermal explosion, a magma eruption or an explosive eruption?"

"Yep, I think that covers most of the possibilities. If Long Valley erupted, I think it's more than likely that it was an explosive eruption. There's been lots of carbon dioxide in the soil out there, trees been dying for years. They say, 'Measurements of the total discharge of carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas at the Horseshoe Lake tree kill area range from 50-150 tons per day. Variations are primarily caused by changes in barometric pressure. There is no obvious trend of either increasing or decreasing gas flux at this area; we conclude that the total gas flux coming to the surface at Horseshoe Lake has remained at these relatively high levels since 1996. We do not have enough data from any other gas discharge areas around the mountain to draw conclusions about changes over time at those locations.'"

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What a mess... terrorist attacks, surrounded by the South American Army, most of the major cities and several military bases destroyed, sickness, bad weather and now the possibility of volcanic ash. Worse, I had the best rifles in the area and they wouldn't let me go on patrol. I don't see why, I could go 100-yards or more before I had to stop for a few minutes and catch my breath. I always took time to have a smoke when I rested, it calmed my nerves. I could carry more ammo than I'd ever shoot, 10 magazines loaded with 18 rounds plus one battle pack of South African. To keep the load light, I only carried one LAW and almost always use my original Loaded. That Super Match with its fancy scope was too temperamental while the iron sights on my original rifle were all but indestructible. The McMillan TAC-50 was a better sniper rifle, but it weighed too much.

Why couldn't we have won the lottery when we first moved to Kalifornia? In those days, a man could buy an HK91, HK93, FN FAL and several different main battle rifles for a grand or less. That shop down on Parthenia must have had 100 cases of each of both 5.56x45mm and 7.62x51mm sitting in their main showroom floor. They also had a huge warehouse behind the showroom. Today those same guns were worth 5-6 times as much and the prices of ammo had probably gone up about as much. Then, the damned UN got involved in the small arms trade and we couldn't buy surplus ammo any more. In '82, that wasn't a problem. Rather than shipping 10s of thousands of rounds of .308 NATO to the US, South Africa was obligated to spend more money and demil it. The Lake City had been ok, when you could get it and provided is wasn't mixed lot ammo.

The good news was that the 'eruption' at Yellowstone was a very large and violent hydrothermal explosion, independent of associated volcanism. We wouldn't be seeing an ash cloud from there, according to the ham from Greeley. That gave us a spare when it came to disasters. However, the ham I talked to in Truckee was back on the air. He said that Long Valley had, indeed, erupted, but for some strange reason, they weren't getting ash in Truckee. I told him that, according to my research, he probably wouldn't. Good news. Hell it was great news. Yellowstone had potential, Long Valley not so much.

Damon brought up the subject of bugging out. I wanted to know one thing, 'to where'? It's all about location, when you get right down to it. We were in southern Arizona, a very good place to be in the event of a nuclear or volcanic winter. The only downside I could see was that Latin Army and they hadn't proved to be effective. While we didn't have them out gunned, we could make them wish they'd tried hitting an easier site.

Bugging out was the respite of people who lived in or near big cities. Besides, Sharon and I had built a substantial physical plant, 450kw of electricity, more with the soon to be installed wind turbines; a large underground shelter, underground diesel and propane tanks, a large multiuse building called the machine shed, a barn with livestock, etc. I wasn't buying it, but if they needed a 72-hour bag, just in case, that was fine with me. Sharon and I didn't go anywhere without enough supplies for 2 weeks. I'd taken Flight ER Doc's advice and rotated my ammo; apparently the vibration broke down the grains of gunpowder and caused excessive pressure.

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That said, we rarely ventured forth. Derek wouldn't let us go anywhere beyond Whetstone and Benson without a convoy of at least 3 HMMWVs and a fuel hauler. We didn't get a lot of ash, either. According to the ham net, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas got some of the ash, with the heaviest ash fall being in northern Arizona, Nevada and Utah. That's not to say we didn't have action...

I was Air Force, Damon Navy and Derek and Mary both Army. Derek had more experience than the other 3 of us combined. Mary came in second because she pulled a tour in Kosovo. After I got out, or was that because I got out, the Air Force turned into a real military service. There was a time, before the Vietnam War, that only SAC maintained real discipline. I sure that must have applied to TAC, but I never saw any of them at Edwards.

I had wanted to reenlist, back in '65, but my Dad made me an offer I couldn't refuse. Besides, to stay in, I would have to quit drinking and probably smoking. They adopted new physical standards and I would have to shed 25 pounds, began exercising and even jogging. If I had it to do over, I wouldn't have started drinking in the first place, but I didn't know I was an alcoholic. When I finally figured it out, I was past caring. I just needed the next drink.

On the other hand, I'd have probably died from a heart attack at age 42, like my father almost had. Shhh, that's a family secret, I didn't know about it for 20 years. Mom said, years later, that it happened around the Cuban Missile Crisis.

◦

LONDON (Reuters) – Israel has drawn up secret plans to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment facilities with tactical nuclear weapons, Britain's Sunday Times newspaper said.

Citing what it said were several Israeli military sources, the paper said two Israeli air force squadrons had been training to blow up an enrichment plant in Natanz using low-yield nuclear "bunker busters".

Two other sites, a heavy water plant at Arak and a uranium conversion plant at Isfahan, would be targeted with conventional bombs, the Sunday Times said.

The UN Security Council voted unanimously last month to slap sanctions on Iran to try to stop uranium enrichment that Western powers fear could lead to making bombs. Tehran insists its plans are peaceful and says it will continue enrichment.

Israel has refused to rule out pre-emptive military action against Iran along the lines of its 1981 air strike against an atomic reactor in Iraq, though many analysts believe Iran's nuclear facilities are too much for Israel to take on alone.

The newspaper said the Israeli plan envisaged conventional laser-guided bombs opening "tunnels" into the targets. Nuclear warheads would then be used fired into the plant at Natanz, exploding deep underground to reduce radioactive fallout.

Israeli pilots have flown to Gibraltar in recent weeks to train for the 2,000 mile round-trip to the Iranian targets, the Sunday Times said, and three possible routes to Iran have been mapped out including one over Turkey.

However it also quoted sources as saying a nuclear strike would only be used if a conventional attack was ruled out and if the United States declined to intervene. Disclosure of the plans could be intended to put pressure on Tehran to halt enrichment, the paper added.

Washington has said military force remains an option while insisting that its priority is to reach a diplomatic solution.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map". Israel, widely believed to have the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, has said it will not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons.

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I see that my crystal ball is still working pretty well, sometimes. I can't explain why it didn't show me Long Valley blowing its lid, maybe it's tuned to nuclear war. A nuclear war is inevitable because the number of nuclear powers keeps increasing. When there were just 5 of us, and 90% of the weapons were in the hands of Russia or the Americans, it was manageable. Why? Because of MAD. Now you add Iran, North Korea, India and

Pakistan to the mix and you have trouble. Plus the Israelis have a few, but like Sgt. Shultz, they know nothing. They denied planning on nuking Iran, but what did you expect?

Damn it's cold; it's that dry cold, like we used to get in Palmdale. On the average, it snowed about 0.7 times a year in Palmdale. It wasn't much, an inch or two, but you'd have thought it was worse than Denver. Those drivers out there can't drive in the rain, let alone the snow. The Highway Patrol made you put on chains every time it snowed.

Those folks, who say the greatest danger is a global climate change, are right. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to realize that a few nukes set off in some cities, followed by WW III, followed by Long Valley blowing up will change the atmosphere for a very, very long time. That's a whole lot of dust in the air and there has to be a lot of carbon dioxide floating around. Unfortunately, an ANDAIR air filter won't do you much good; you need a carbon dioxide scrubber to clear the air. We had 2, one for each of the ANDAIR filters. Plus we had plenty of spare parts for the scrubbers and the AV-150s.

Israel waited until their threat was long forgotten. Only then did they nuke Iran and while they were at it, they nuked some of their neighbors. That probably led to those Muslim extremists nuking our cities and releasing a plague or two. I'm just speculating as far as the plagues go. It wasn't hard to eliminate the Latin's who were at our southern borders; why attack us, if they were going to turn around and release a couple of plagues?

In some ways, I was about the closest thing as we had to a rocket scientist. Although, it was really stretching things to say that an Instrumentation Technician was a Rocket Scientist. In the '60s, we really were, but that was a very long time ago. Now Phelps Dodge trained people to be Instrumentation Technicians at their place in Thatcher, AZ, or they used to. I doubt they were really trained in the same things we were, but technology had changed so many things. When it came to pure electronics, Damon was far better trained than I was. He was an ET in the Navy.

Derek was about the closest thing we had to a pure soldier; him and his friends, to be accurate. I could shoot fair, but he embarrassed me when we went shooting together at the range. My maximum range was about 200 meters; his was at least 400 shooting with iron sights and a lot more with those telescopic sights. Of course, anyone but a blind man could shoot well with that Tac-50, Night Force scope, MUNS and Jet suppressor.

Whetstone – Chapter 23

The firm denial by Israel of a report in the London Sunday Times that its Air Force was training for a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities was as predictable as it is hollow. There is no doubt that Israel's fighter-bombers have been training for a long-distance mission; NATO sources say they have for weeks been watching Israeli warplanes running flights the length of the Mediterranean to Gibraltar – and nobody expects an Israeli strike on Gibraltar.

The drumbeats of war are beginning to sound from several directions. In Washington, the transfer of Admiral William "Fox" Fallon from Pacific Command to run Central Command (which runs the Iraq war and the Afghan mission) startled the Army and Marines, who had seen these as ground wars. But Central Command also includes Iran.

Fallon's appointment comes as the White House wants to increase the military pressure on Tehran. Fallon is heading to the region with some heavy reinforcements of two aircraft carrier strike groups, led by the USS John C. Stennis and the state-of-the-art new USS Ronald Reagan which left San Diego last week.

And then there was the remarkable suggestion from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, one of the Sunni leaders appalled by the fate of fellow Sunnis in Iraq and the growing prospect of a Shiite alliance led by Iran.

"We don't want nuclear arms in the area but we are obligated to defend ourselves," Mubarak said at a joint press conference last week with Israeli premier Ehud Olmert. "We will have to have the appropriate weapons. It is irrational that we sit and watch from the sidelines when we might be attacked at any moment."

The abrupt resignation last month of the Saudi ambassador to Washington, Prince Turki, reflected the sharp debate in Riyadh over the best way to respond to the Iranian threat. Prince Turki's predecessor in Washington, Prince Bandar, is now acting as the Saudi equivalent of the national security adviser and he is a hawk, convinced that the Saudi monarchy must rally the Gulf States and the Sunni nations against the prospect of a Shiite empire led by a nuclear-armed Iran.

Prince Turki was a dove, who wanted dialogue and negotiations and feared that military strikes against Iran would set the entire region ablaze. Pessimists among the Saudi-watchers say that he lost; optimists say that he returned to Riyadh to continue the argument.

Meanwhile back in Washington, the new House majority leader, Democratic Congressman Steny Hoyer, gave an interview to the Jerusalem Post, published Sunday, that declared a nuclear-armed Iran would be unacceptable.

Hoyer stressed that he backed "discussions, negotiations, sanctions." But Hoyer added that the threat of air strikes had to remain. On the possible use of force to end any Irani-

an ambitions to deploy nuclear weapons, Hoyer said, "I have not ruled that out. It is not an option we want to consider until we know there is no other option."

The Iranians, for their part, seem to be closing ranks against what they perceive as the mounting threat of military action. Former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is seen as a relative moderate in Tehran terms and was defeated in the last presidential election by the fiery Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said last week that "the enemies of the Islamic Republic have plans against the country."

Rafsanjani warned the "arrogant powers" (the United States and Britain) against launching a new crisis in the Middle East. "They are creating problems for themselves and the region that will not be confined to Iran. This is a fire that could burn many others," he went on. "They are looking for a pretext."

This closing of the ranks in Tehran is significant, since many top Iranian officials make little secret of their distaste for the rhetoric and populism of Ahmadinejad. However much they may sympathize with Ahmadinejad's statements that "Israel must be wiped from the map," or that the Holocaust was an "invention of the Zionists," or that the "Zionist state is illegitimate," they have found him to be an embarrassment. But now they are rallying round.

Most striking was the message by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to the pilgrims to Mecca to celebrate the Haj, which endorsed Ahmadinejad's skepticism of the Holocaust and Israel's right to exist. How, Khamenei asked, could it be a punishable offense in the West to question the Holocaust when the Pope could "openly defame Islam?"

But then he went on to challenge the leaders of the Arabic world, the Saudi monarchy and Jordan and Egypt, to end their support for the West and rally round the "united identity of the Muslim ummah" (nation).

Every disaster that had affected the Islamic world in the 20th century, Khamenei said, from colonization to "the creation and strengthening of authoritarian regimes, plundering of their natural wealth and destruction of their human resources, and thereby keeping Muslim nations behind the caravan of progress in science and technology – all this has become possible only under the shadow of Muslim disunity that in some cases reached the level of internecine and fratricidal strife."

"Today any divisive action in the Islamic world is a historical sin," Khamenei went on. "Those who maliciously use takfir to declare large groups of Muslims as unbelievers (by this he means the Shiites, seen by the puritan (Sunni) Wahhabites of Saudi Arabia as not true Muslims), will be regarded as culprits, detested by history and future generations, and looked upon as mercenaries of the brutal enemy."

Khamenei has not spoken in such extreme terms for some years, and his rhetoric points to the nervousness, perhaps even verging on panic, which seems to be gripping the Tehran leadership. Alarmed by the decision of Russia and China at the United Nations

Security Council to agree on the relatively modest sanctions against Iran, the Iranians sent their top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, to Beijing last week where he sought to continue Tehran's traditionally equivocal tactics.

Larijani stressed that Iran had not (unlike North Korea) abrogated the nuclear non-proliferation treaty nor had it stopped its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iran remained open to negotiations, Larijani said, and pointedly referred to the close economic relations that now existed between Iran and China, symbolized by the privileged role China now enjoyed in helping to develop Iran's oil and gas reserves.

Back in Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad-Ali Hosseini said Sunday that Chinese officials had agreed that the dispute should be resolved through negotiations, noting that China had adopted "a much more logical and fair stance on Iran's peaceful nuclear program."

But for once, these well-honed Iranian tactics did not work; the Chinese appeared to hold firm, insisting that Tehran come up with "realistic proposals." Yet the political mood in Tehran does not seem conciliatory, and the military pressure is building ominously.

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Like I said, it was inevitable. The Israelis were ready for whenever they needed to conduct the mission to Tehran. The difference was they intended to use low yield nuclear weapons this time. My only explanation of why they didn't is that someone changed his/her mind. My reasoning should be obvious, if Israel used nukes, it would be the first time since 1945 that any country used nuclear weapons, other than testing them. No country could ignore that, especially not the 'communist nations'. Russia had finished building the Iranian reactor and they couldn't be expected to act like the French after the Israelis destroyed the reactor they built for Saddam. Moreover, the Chinese could be expected to be involved because they needed the Iranian oil.

I keep going back to the war because I wanted to understand what WE did to anyone to get them to attack us. The United States had always supported Israel. One of the few times I can remember our interfering with their plans when we prevented them from retaliating against Iraq when Saddam fired Scuds at Israel during Desert Storm. We provided Israel with Patriot missiles to help intercept the Scuds. Our close relationship may be because of the distribution of the Jewish population around the world that I mentioned earlier, a full third of them live in the US.

I know my tales wander around from here to there and back again, wait until you get senile and trying writing a cohesive story. Unfortunately, I get bored and my keyboard is never far away. This story started out to be about how Sharon and I would prepare when we won the lottery. With over 50 stories as reference, I put together a plan. It didn't take long for that to go to hell; I couldn't remember the story line. You want food, see TOM; ammo, that too; and, precious metals – we have a lifetime supply.

Sounds pretty good, until you start to analyze what we didn't have. We weren't secure in our homes, but that was nothing new, we hadn't been secure in our home since '82 when we moved to Kalifornia. There was that brief lull in '07-'08 right after we won the lottery. We moved from the middle of the terror zone to somewhere out in the middle of nowhere in Arizona. Sort of good, it was downwind from Tucson.

Built our (my) dream shelter, got the barn, machine shed and a few miscellaneous out-buildings. Life was pretty good. Springfield Armory had to put on a second shift for a week when I got to buying rifles and McMillian Brothers were happy to sell another of their fine rifles. That's the problem, you see, we got ready. When we weren't ready, nothing happened. But, that's relative because we didn't live in New Orleans.

I don't know if it's an analogy or a metaphor, but the closest I can to describing the way life had been running is a funnel. The world's trouble seemed to get closer and closer with the passage of time, ah, the information age. When we didn't know for a couple of days about things happening in a far off land, it wasn't a big deal. And then came Ted Turner and the Communist News Network. If some world leader broke wind, we all knew about it before the smell was gone.

After that came the competition and several cable news network's sprang up, each one trying to outdo the others. When there was a shooting, they finally got to where they were speculating on the types of bullets used. Except for Fox News, they were all totally opposed to war. I sometimes got the feeling that we'd have been better off if we'd nuked 'em and let God sort 'em out; the uproar in the media wouldn't have been any worse. Some guy would go postal (do you remember when that meant delivering the mail) and the media would speculate about his motives.

Eventually, the media pressured the terrorists into committing terrorist acts and finally the major nuclear powers to go at it. No biggie, we were prepared. We had a 10 year supply of propane and enough diesel fuel to wear out the engine. We hadn't skimped on food and there were cases of seeds.

Except... the terrorists pulled off at least 3 attacks that we knew of, bombings and two different bioweapons. Hugo Chávez wasn't content to create a Marxist Country, he wanted to export it. The Israelis got tired of worrying about their neighbors and eliminated most of them. Now most of the world lay in ruins, the weather sux and nature decided to go on a rampage. Worse, I had enough meds to keep me around to watch it all happen.

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Bottom line was Cascadia adjusted, Yellowstone sort of burped and Long Valley went postal. But wait, that's only 8. Can you picture snow on the Sonoran Desert? Back in '07, we were worried about the heat! Do you remember when I mentioned those submarines that deposited loads of terrorists on our shores? That was after the bombings of the cities and before the bioweapons release. We didn't know about them at the time, or

that they were responsible for the bioweapons. At the moment we still didn't, which led to an interesting the summer the following year.

Derek's patrols kept the Latinos off our back and we got through the winter without any action. It was around my birthday when Walter showed up. He said his name was Walter Lang and he had once farmed in Iowa. I asked what he grew and it was just the usual crops: corn, alfalfa and oats. Walt had a dairy cow he kept for milk, hogs he raised for meat and a couple of feeders that he butchered and shared with his sons. He said they kept six hens and when they quit producing, they became baking hens.

Walt said he leased out most of the land and just grew a little, he was semi-retired. When he had his heart attack, he turned the farm over to his oldest boy and moved to Benson. He and Helen had lived here since '08. He'd run into Derek in Benson and learned that I was from Iowa, wanted to know what I thought of the coming growing season.

"Walt, I was never a farmer. When I was 9 years old, we moved to the big city. I have many relatives who farm, but I never did. From what I've heard on the ham bands, we could have a bad year. Did you know about Cascadia, Long Valley and Yellowstone?"

"Well, we visited Yellowstone one year, what about it?"

"It burped; you know had a hydrothermal explosion. Long Valley is in the Owens Valley of eastern Kalifornia, it blew its top, a massive volcanic eruption. I expect part of the grey skies is dust from the eruption. Far worse, in my opinion, is the Cascadian Subduction Zone. About half of it had been locked, you know. Anyway, according to a ham in Washington, it slipped, caused a massive earthquake and following tsunami."

"You don't say. I don't like the idea of having ash in the air; the winter was already bad enough."

"We moved here in '07 and this is the first time I remember snow. All this time, Sharon and I had been worried about the heat."

"Say, do we have you to thank for getting the lights turned back on?"

"That would be my son, Derek. He's the one who came up with those wind turbines and has overseen getting them installed. We only put in half of what he found; the remainder is spares or trade goods."

"Trade goods? Say, I picked up a good used Mauser rifle, not so long ago; do you know where I can get more ammo?"

"Would a case be enough?"

"Do you have some?"

"Only a little, I've been unloading it since I began giving the rifles away. Got my investment back, I guess I could afford to give you a case."

"How much?"

"I planned to give it to you."

"I pay my own way, how much?"

"How about 4 one ounce silver coins? That about the amount I had in it."

"I have a half ounce gold coin, can you make change?"

"I'll get 21 one ounce silver coins and the case of ammo, give me a minute."

"You have enough gold and silver to make change?"

"Only a little (I lied). There you go Walt. I have 3 more cases if you need it."

"I hope I don't. I planned to use the rifle for hunting and home defense."

"That ammo is military ball ammo, it not much good for hunting. Try to pick up a box of reloads, there are a couple of guys loading hunting ammo for the Mauser's."

"What do you carry?"

"Most generally, a M1A. That's the civilian version of the M14 rifle. I have several guns; it sort of depends on my mood."

"Is that tank yours?"

"Derek's. It's a M1A3E3, a prototype. It has the new L55 developed by Rheinmetall GmbH of Ratingen, Germany to replace the shorter 120 millimeter L44 smoothbore tank gun. It permits effective use of a new APFSDS-T round, DM53 (LKE II), with a longer rod penetrator. The AT-1500 engine has been replaced with some experimental engine. I think he said they upgraded the sighting system, too."

"Jeez, you have a bunch of military vehicles."

"We do. And we have about 300 soldiers to go with them. Our strength is about 6 Platoons. There are still some of those Latino's around, you know."

"Even after the war?"

"Go figure... I guess Hugo won't let them go home."

"If you need help, let me know, I was in artillery in 'Nam."

"Thanks, Walt, I'll tell Derek. As to your original question, I have no idea what to expect this next growing season. Hell, I don't even know if we will have a growing season. If it were me, I'd not plant all of my seed, there's always a chance of a crop failure due to weather."

"You have a lot of seed?"

"Some... need any?"

"No, I'm ok for now, we only use heirloom seeds and I suppose I have about a 3 year supply."

"We have every bit of that and just a smidge more."

"Heirlooms?"

"Yep."

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There was no way that I'd tell a man I just met that we had to convert one of the bedrooms in the shelter into a vault to hold the gold and silver. Or, that valued at \$600 an ounce for gold, we had \$45 million in gold and silver. Of course I valued gold at \$1,500 an ounce and silver at \$30. In fact, we kept about a million of it in the house because the vault was full. With our new standard price of \$1,500/\$30 an ounce, we were on our way to catching up to Bill Gates. I didn't gouge him on the ammo, I'd paid \$89 a case when silver was only at \$12 an ounce (7.4oz).

I said it was my birthday. I turned 70 today, 3/23/13. Man, I felt every inch of being 70. I knew we were going to have devil's food cake tonight; if I was lucky, with coffee frosting. I knew that Aaron had gotten our hand cranked ice cream freezer; I was hoping he turn out some vanilla to go with the cake. We also had an electric powered freezer, somewhere. If we limited the 'celebration' to family only, we could get by with a single cake and one freezer of vanilla. They were both 6-quart White Mountain freezers from Canning Pantry. Sharon always bakes the cakes in a lasagna pan using a double recipe. When they come out right, one cake will feed at least 20 people, large servings.

I never counted, but between the diesel tankers and the JP-8, we weren't short on fuel. We had gotten short on PRI-D, but a trip to a marina solved that, they bought it back by the 5 gallon pail. Between keeping the no-man's land clear and salvaging, we were busy whenever the weather permitted. 2013 was revealing itself to be a solar maximum, ergo, communications were awful. There are 2 theories on that, the eleven year cycle described by Schwabe-Wolf and the 22 year cycle described by Babcock.

Many communication systems use the ionosphere to reflect radio signals over long distances. Ionospheric storms can affect radio communication at all latitudes. Some radio frequencies are absorbed and others are reflected, leading to rapidly fluctuating signals and unexpected propagation paths. TV and commercial radio stations are little affected by solar activity, but ground-to-air, ship-to-shore, shortwave broadcast, and amateur radio (mostly the bands below 30MHz) are frequently disrupted. Radio operators using high frequencies rely upon solar and geomagnetic alerts to keep their communication circuits up and running. We were pretty far south to see any Northern Lights. I was totally shocked when the sky cleared enough that I saw them, it was one heck of a birthday present.

"Oh, cream cheese, huh?"

"I thought you liked it."

"I do, but I like coffee frosting better."

"Aaron made ice cream."

"Did you see the Northern Lights?"

"When?"

"Right now. Go look."

You know, I should have figured on creamed cheese frosting, she bought 2 cases of it at Costco, way back when. I had wanted to go to the range today; it was too cold and then Walt showed up. Even though I have a parka, I seem to have trouble keeping warm, must be my poor circulation. That's one I haven't figured out, my bp is normal, 110/70 and I take aspirin to keep my blood thinned out. Plus I take Prevacid to keep the aspirin from giving me my ulcers back. About the only thing that has changed on my meds is the insulin. We had a real problem finding extra disposable insulin syringes and I started doing like my Dad, using one syringe for a week at a time. Man, does the needle ever get dull!

I only had 12 boxes of syringes on the shelf and would have had more, had not things gone to hell. Missy passed in '08, effectively doubling the number of syringes I had. For whatever reason, we probably got busy, I didn't get the other 12 boxes of syringes I had ordered. Normally, I use a little over 7 boxes of syringes a year, 730. I began to notice I was running short and asked both Damon and Derek to keep an eye out for 3/10cc (30 unit) insulin syringes. I could also use the 5/10cc and 1cc although I didn't really like to.

They gathered what they could find and I used up the larger syringes first. You can't use those short needled (8mm) syringes for IM injections and at 31 gauge, they're almost too fine for IV use. These pharmacists got really hinky when you tell them you wanted a

dozen boxes of insulin syringes. It's not like you want a dozen boxes of Sudafed. We had 36 boxes of that purchased one at a time. I use it when I get a cold; it really dries out my head.

"I hadn't seen those in years."

"Yeah me either. Not since we moved to Kalifornia."

"We're further south now than we were in Palmdale, why do you think we saw them?"

"Probably a massive corona ejection. They happen once in a while, but I don't know if it's on an 11 year or 22 year cycle. I can tell you that radio communications are pretty bad on the long bands."

"Then use the short bands."

"Dear, they don't have the range."

Palmdale is located at 34°34'52"N, 118°06'02"W. Whetstone is located at 31°42'14"N, 110°20'53"W. One degree of latitude equals 60 nautical miles and each second 1 nautical mile. Whetstone was located ~ 172 nautical miles or 1.150779 times 172 equals ~198 statute miles south of Palmdale. The conversion factor for kilometers is 1 nautical mile equals exactly 1.852 kilometers and 1 statute mile equals 1.6093 kilometers. There used to be a table on Wiki that allowed you to look up units of measurement. Do you have Convert? joshmadison.net/software/convert/download.php If not, why not? You don't have Windows? Why do you hate Bill Gates? I don't mind Bill Gates, but I don't like Michael Dell. He outsourced his tech support to Mumbai (Bombay). There ain't no Bombay now, the Pakistanis nuked it, or so I heard. That's ok, there's no internet, either.

This story wasn't about Sharon and me winning the lottery. All that did was enable us to do exactly what we wanted to do. Yes, both of us, she wanted to get out of Kalifornia so badly, she could taste it. If I had a dollar for every time I heard her wish we could move, I wouldn't have needed the lottery ticket. That brings to mind the old expression, wish in one hand and spit in the other...

We hope to start planting a garden in mid-April, possibly later, that depends on the weather. We've increase our herds of livestock slightly, it wasn't easy because we had-n't started out to have herds. The chickens were the easiest part; we stopped gathering eggs for a while. Those 2 roosters we had were really strutting. Damon and Aaron looked around some and came up with more hogs, cattle and horses. They even had the tack for the horses.

That 60+ year old 2N Ford was getting a workout. It was never intended to be a row crop tractor and was too small to mount much equipment on. We could mount a mower, pull the manure spreader or a wagon and not much else. Moreover, it burned gas, not diesel.

We were giving thought to the crops we'd plant this spring. Some corn, oats, barley, wheat and alfalfa plus a very large garden. We'd get grain and bedding from the oats and wheat, livestock feed from the corn and alfalfa. Some of the corn could be turned into people food, corn meal and the like. We weren't the only family planning on some sort of farm; I think maybe Walt was going to give it a try.

After my back surgery back in '97 or '98, I'd been forced to retire. They said I was disabled, but retired sounds better. From then until we won the lottery, my health continued to fail, little by little. By the first of February '07, I'd suddenly gotten much better. Must have been because I'd gotten off my dead butt and done something. By the time we'd gotten settled in here in Whetstone, both of us were getting around much better.

I can remember telling Sharon that the war in Iraq had cost the Republicans the White House in '08. Bill O'Reilly had it right, one last shot and then regardless of the outcome, come home. I was reading other things at the time; they mostly focused on how the War on Terror had put us on the brink of WW III. I doubt anyone expected Hugo to do what he did; thank God the troops were home. We'd have been better off if they'd gotten that M1A3E3 beyond the testing stage, they'd have made a difference on the border.

It wasn't that big of a deal, the new tank was still the basic M1A2 with a new gun, engine and fire control system. DOD was looking at a 5-6 year conversion, beginning after they approved the new model. They had to license the L55 gun from the Germans, get Honeywell to build the engines and probably General Dynamics to build the new fire control systems. I half wonder if Derek could get the parts and convert 3 of the A2s to the new A3E3.

There probably hadn't been one survivalist who hadn't seen the war coming. It had gotten hard in '06 to buy surplus ammo and '07 was far worse. I managed those 15 battle packs of SA 7.62x51mm, 2,100 rounds. We'd shot up 100 rounds at Christmas '06. I knew I should get to the range and practice, but it was almost to Saugus and I didn't drive at that time. The name of the range was, *A Place to Shoot*.

I know that I ramble, but I'm 70. I've shuffled when I walk for about 25 years, too. Bought the Tac-50, but don't use it, I can barely pick it up. I just wanted to leave a record of how things were both before and after. You might ask, 'before and after what?' I guess the real focus has to be WW III, which was the real turning point. Back on 9/11/01, we had I guess our 3rd major terrorist attack, they brought down the World Trade Center in New York. The first attack was in '93, when some Muslims tried to blow the place up. The second attack wasn't Muslims at all, just some wanttobe bad guy named McVeigh who blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City.

Whetstone – Chapter 24

On 9/11/01, a bunch of Muslims hijacked 4 planes. Two of them were flown into the WTC towers, one into the Pentagon and the fourth crashed in Pennsylvania. First we went into Afghanistan, looking to find and kill Osama bin Laden. Never happened. In '03, we decided to take out Saddam Hussein. It took a while, but we found him, the Iraqis tried him and they hanged him. You could watch the hanging on Youtube, I didn't BTW.

The problem was we didn't have a good plan of what to do with Iraq when we beat them. Sort of turned around and bit us on the butt. In '07, just before we won the lottery, Dubya decided to ignore everyone and increase our troop presence over there. Must have worked out ok, we eventually left. Of course, by that time, our collation of the willing only included US.

Like I said, the survivalists around the country knew what was coming, they just didn't know when. It had somehow turned into a religious war, the Muslims against the infidels. I have no idea where Hugo fits into that, he was a Marxist. Chávez accused the government of the United States of attempting to turn Colombia into Venezuela's adversary, after US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld suggested that Colombia and other countries would be concerned over Venezuela's recent military purchases. "The US Empire doesn't lose a chance to attack us and try to create discord between us," Chávez said. "That's one of the Empire's strategies: Try to keep us divided." The Colombian government did not take sides during the incident.

There was much ado with the Russian sales of arms to Venezuela. Dubya imposed sanctions on 3 Russian firms... like Russia really cared. When I read that and the article about China protesting sanctions we imposed on some of their firms over arms sales, I pretty much knew we were getting close. Right after we won the lottery, I loaded up on ammo. Especially 7.62 NATO, we were getting closer, I just knew it. I have nothing against the Marxists, they made good targets. I must say, I was happy when México went with the version of the H&K G36, it was a 5.56×45mm cartridge. We all know how I feel about the 5.56, but the Venezuelans used 7.62×39mm cartridge in their AK-103s. M16s were also plentiful throughout South and Central America. It must have been a logistics nightmare for the Latin's. There were only a few of them left, most bugged out when the war came.

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"Dad, are you there?"

"Where else would I be?"

"Never mind. I called to give you a heads up. We out here in the boonies west of home and we've picked up signs of a group moving through the area within the last hour."

"How can you tell that?"

"The wind hasn't blown the snow back in the tracks. As nearly as we can tell, you have 4 vehicles headed your way. Put the rest of the troops on alert and tell Bill we'll be back in about 30 mikes."

Well, that's why I had a PA speaker on the CB... "Bill, heads up, incoming."

"Incoming what?"

"Bad guys. Derek just radioed. He says they cut sign for 4 vehicles headed our way."

"Rog, when will the L-T be back?"

"30 mikes."

The principal problem was that the earthen embankment only went across the front of the acreage. If these people were coming cross country, they could hit us from the flank or back. As I came out of the shelter, I heard the engine idling on the tank. I turned and they were warming up the engines on the Paladins, too. That's some heavy duty stuff and I was certain that those artillery shells could probably reach out and touch someone, like Derek.

"We don't need any damned arty, Bill; you'll end up shelling Derek. The range on some of those shells is 30,000 meters (18.64 miles)!"

"I wouldn't do that, we're just going to move it out of the way. Why don't you get back in your shelter and let the professionals handle this?"

"Say what?"

"Go protect the women."

"I thought so."

Those banditos showed up, we were between them and town. There were as many of them as there were of us. More of them were on foot than riding in their 4 trucks. Some of them had G3 rifles, some the G36 and the rest either FX05s, AK-47s, AK-74s or AK-103s, not to mention plenty of RPGs and a few medium and one heavy machine gun. The maximum effective range of the Mk19 and Ma Deuces notwithstanding, Bill and the others never let them get really close. The firefight no more got going then Derek and his patrol showed up, creating a crossfire.

I suppose the thing that helped us the most was the defensive positions I hadn't known about. I swear, nobody tells me anything other than, 'guard the women'. I didn't need to do that, Mary and Amy were there to protect Sharon and Lorrie (and probably me). We

were in the shelter but hadn't buttoned up, just in case. I was trying to follow the action on the radio, but they were too busy shooting to talk much. I guess I'm destined to miss all of the fun.

I didn't figure it would last long, I was wrong. Then, I heard the boom of the M256A1 and figured they were probably using HEAT rounds. They weren't, I later found out, they were using M1028 Canister. The round provides effective rapid lethal reaction against massed assaulting infantry armed with hand held anti-tank and automatic weapons at close range (500 meters or less) thereby improving survivability. Additionally, the round significantly increases the tank's lethality and enhances the tank crew's survivability. The additional capability gives the Abrams Tank the ability to survive RPG ambushes and to fully support friendly infantry assaults. Didn't sound any different than any of the practice rounds they'd fired.

It was late afternoon before the firing died off and Derek stuck his head through the shelter cover and said we could leave. When I got topside, they were busy stripping bodies of anything useful and loading them on the 4 trucks. I noticed right away that there was a growing pile of weapons and munitions. I pulled my coat a little tighter and stood there guarding the collection; it was fresh meat for the table, as good as money in the bank.

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World War III, or the Third World War, was a term used to describe a hypothetical conflict on the scale of WW I, WW II or larger. Most usages of the term assumed the use of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons, biological or chemical weapons.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, an apocalyptic war between the United States and the USSR was considered likely. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 is generally thought to be the historical point at which the risk of World War III was closest. Other potential starts have included the following:

- 1948-1949 – Berlin Blockade: The USSR blockaded Western Berlin in an attempt to remove America, France and Great Britain from Berlin. Some American politicians suggested an invasion of East Germany, however Truman was dissuaded from this by analysts saying that the risk and fallout of WWIII would be too great. (The Allies dealt with the Berlin Blockade with the Berlin Airlift, which was ultimately successful).
- July 26, 1956 - March, 1957 – Suez Crisis: The conflict pitted Egypt against an alliance between the French, the United Kingdom and Israel. When the USSR threatened to intervene on behalf of Egypt, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson feared a larger war and persuaded the British and French to withdraw. The Eisenhower administration, fearing a wider war, had applied pressure to the United Kingdom to withdraw, including a threat to create a currency crisis by dumping US holdings of British debt.

- October 27, 1962 – Cuban Missile Crisis: The conflict pitted the US against an alliance between the USSR and Cuba. The USSR was attempting to place several launch sites in Cuba in response to the United States installation of missiles in Turkey. The United States response included dispersal of SAC bombers to airfields around the United States and war games in which the United States Marine Corps landed against a dictator named "ORTSAC" (Castro spelt backwards). For a brief while, the US military went to DEFCON 3, while SAC went to DEFCON 2. The crisis peaked on October 27, when a U-2 (piloted by Rudolph Anderson) was shot down over Cuba and another U-2 flight over Russia was almost intercepted when it strayed over Siberia, after Curtis LeMay (US Air Force Chief of Staff) had neglected to enforce Presidential orders to suspend all over flights.
- October 24, 1973 – Yom Kippur War: As the Yom Kippur War was winding down, a Soviet threat to intervene on Egypt's behalf caused the United States to go to DEFCON 3. (This was the height of Watergate and Nixon didn't know what Haig and Kissinger did. The Soviets quickly detected the increased American defense condition, and were astonished and bewildered at the response. "Who could have imagined the Americans would be so easily frightened," said Nikolai Podgomy. "It is not reasonable to become engaged in a war with the United States because of Egypt and Syria," said Premier Alexi Kosygin, while KGB chief Yuri Andropov added that "We shall not unleash the Third World War". In the end, the Soviets reconciled themselves to an Arab defeat. The letter from the American cabinet arrived during the meeting. Brezhnev decided that the Americans were too nervous, and that the best course of action would be to wait to reply. The next morning, the Egyptians agreed to the American suggestion, and dropped their request for assistance from the Soviets, bringing the crisis to an end.
- November 9, 1979 – False 'Soviet First Strike' Alarm: The US made emergency retaliation preparations after NORAD saw on-screen indications that a full-scale Soviet attack had been launched. No attempt was made to use the "red telephone" hotline to clarify the situation with the USSR and it was not until early-warning radar systems confirmed no such launch had taken place that NORAD realized that a computer system test had caused the display errors. A Senator inside the NORAD facility at the time described an atmosphere of absolute panic. A GAO investigation led to the construction of an off-site test facility, to prevent similar mistakes subsequently.
- March 30, 1981 – Ronald Reagan assassination attempt: In the panic the United States government had confusion on who was in control. The DEFCON status was raised and intelligence showed movement of Soviet forces.
- September 26, 1983 – False 'US First Strike' Alarm: Soviet early warning systems showed that a US ICBM attack had been launched. Colonel Stanislav Petrov, in command of the monitoring facility, correctly put the warning down to computer error and did not notify his superiors.

- November 1983 – Exercise Able Archer: The USSR mistook a test of NATO's nuclear-release procedures as a fake cover for a NATO attack and subsequently raised its nuclear alert level. It was not until afterwards that the US realized how close it had come to nuclear war. At the time of the exercise the Soviet Politburo was without a healthy functioning head due to the failing health of then leader Yuri Andropov, which is thought to have been one of the contributing factors to the Soviet concern over the exercise.

- January 25, 1995 – Norwegian Rocket Incident: A Norwegian missile launch for scientific research was detected from Spitsbergen and thought to be an attack on Russia, launched from a submarine five minutes away from Moscow. Norway had notified the world that it would be making the launch, but the Russian Defense Ministry had neglected to notify those monitoring Russia's nuclear defense systems.

In addition to the above there are two other points during the Cold War that could have resulted in world war. These, however, are not generally listed as they do not relate to the United States-Soviet Union rivalry, but rather the events following the Sino-Soviet Split of 1960. The ideological split between Maoist communists (represented primarily by China) and Stalinist communists (represented primarily by the Soviet Union) divided the entire communist movement worldwide – which controlled governments or significant rebel factions on most continents. Thus a war between China and the Soviet Union may well have resulted in world war, while not necessarily involving the US and the capitalist west. The two points the communist powers almost entered into all-out war over were:

- March 1969, when border clashes broke out between Soviet and Chinese troops over Zhen Bao Island in the Ussuri River. In total, the Soviets suffered about 90 casualties to 800 for the Chinese. At the time there were almost one and a half million troops deployed along the border.

- 1978 and 1979, in which pro-Soviet Vietnam invaded pro-China Cambodia and removed Pol Pot. China in turn invaded Vietnam in retaliation and the Soviets denounced this action strongly, although it fell short of taking action. The next year the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Chinese claimed this was a continuation of a strategy of encircling China with Soviet allies that had begun the previous year with the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

- Finally, since the end of the Cold War, there have been at least two points in the decades-long conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir which almost escalated into nuclear conflict.

But wait, I need to point out that WW III ceased to be hypothetical around the time I tried to watch *The Day After* and ended up sleeping 100 days.

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I've got to tell you, right here and now, it was nothing like I imagined it would be. Not the war on our southern border, not the terrorist bombings, not the pandemics and certainly not WW III. I had as many things wrong as I had right; still we did confirm the nuclear winter theory and appeared to be confirming the volcanic winter theory. The thing about terrorists is they don't always tell you when they do something. They didn't announce those two pandemics; they just spread the primary pneumonic plague and smallpox without a word. As we were soon to learn, there were 3 pandemics, not 2 and no amount of isolation, no amount of antibiotics, nothing could protect us from the third.

Now you can sit around and wait for the other shoe to drop. If we do, that will finish up the terrorists part of this tale. I'm not telling you because I'm waiting to receive the explanation from Gassville, Arkansas. Meanwhile, I have about 300 weapons, give or take to clean once I persuade someone to help me get them down in the shelter.

"Damon, could you help? I need to get those weapons in the shelter before they rust. It looks like I'm going to need about a case of Breakfree CLP. Plus, I've got to get someone to show me how to dismantle, clean and reassemble the weapons."

He said, I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time. You see my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu. But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad. It's been sure nice talking to you. And as I walked away, it occurred to me, he'd grown up just like me. Damon was just like me. (Cat's In the Cradle – Harry Chapin)

How long is a L55 gun? Figure it out: 120mm times 55 equals 6,600mm which equals 21.65'. I believe the longest barreled cannon is the German PzH 2000, a 155mm self-propelled cannon with a 52 caliber barrel. That's about 26.4' long. It can put shells out to 40km (assisted). Nobody asked, but I think we should buy our self-propelled howitzers from the Germans, theirs seem to be better. The maximum range on the M109 is 30km (assisted), but it only has a 39 caliber gun.

Rather than let the Germans build our weapons, we could license theirs. It seemed to be going that way before the war, anyway. We licensed the L55 gun for the M1A3E2 and H&K was working on the XM8 and 25mm XM25. Speaking of which, The XM25 precisely delivered air-bursting munitions in all conditions, including MOUT and complex terrain. It's five times more lethal at the M203 maximum range and provided lethality well beyond the M203's maximum ability. The system was designed for optimum performance at 300 meters but will perform to 500 meters and beyond.

It included five different types of ammunition:

- Thermobaric
- Flechette
- Training
- High Explosive Air Bursting
- Non-Lethal
- Armor Piercing

Wait, there's a round missing, the Door breaching and there's only 1 training round. But, they did perfect the thermobaric round and added a Flechette round. In my very first story, I proposed using flechette rounds in Thumper, my 12 gauge Gatling gun. Man, did I ever catch hell for that. It's ok, I have some, I just don't talk about it anymore – they punch right through soft body armor. Soft body armor is available that is stab resistant, but used primarily by prison guards.

Next time I talk to Derek, I'll ask about getting some of XM25 grenade launchers and all of the rounds. Not for me, I too old to mess with a gun that looks like that. I've got my original M1A, the shotgun and various other weapons. I have a gun rack on my wheelchair that resulted from modifying a commercial gun rack. I used a shrouded brass 177D Master padlock with 4 numbers set to the 2nd – 5th digits of my SSN, although most of the time I don't lock the padlock. Right, Derek will just run down to the hardware store and Benson and buy some.

Do you know how long it takes to clean that many guns? Wrong, longer... first one has to figure out how to dismantle them, clean them and reassemble them. We sorted them by types so I only had to learn them one at a time. Because I loved the 7.62x51mm, I cleaned the G3s first. Even the Russians got away from the .22 cartridge. Their AK-101 use the .223 (5.56x45mm NATO) and the AK-103 the standard 7.62x39mm. Most of the 100 series of AK rifles were made for the civilian export market and were available in .223 NATO (AK-102), the .223 Russian (AK-105) and the standard AK round (AK-104).

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By the time I had the guns cleaned and put away, they were planting the garden and the crops. Because of the weather, we had a very late spring. They could have helped and I'd have been done much sooner. I claimed the weapons as trade goods and was told I could clean them myself. The attackers had multiple cases of ammo, hand grenades, RPGs and ammo for their machine guns. I used FM 3-23.30 to identify the various grenades, it was quite the assortment, although, most of them were RGD-5 fragmentation grenades. I didn't like them because a person could only throw them 40 meters and they had a blast radius of 15 meters – so they became trade goods.

The folks in Whetstone and Benson were more than ready to trade off the Mauser's to get real assault rifles. I let the grenades go for 5 ounces of silver per, the RPGs for 5 ounces and replacement rockets for 2 ounces, plus a trade in for any rifle. Anyone need a Mauser 98? I traded the ammo, round for round; the Mauser's wouldn't do me any good without ammo. We were doing a lot to get the economy up and running in hopes of maintaining the system of capitalism. I also wanted to get politically active, but at 70, wasn't sure I still had the energy. Interestingly about 3 years after the war we had virtually no idea who was running the country. I kept a few of the better guns, just in case.

Most folks, myself included, expected FEMA to come dragging in sooner or later and try to take over what remained of the country. We especially thought later in light of their

poor showing in New Orleans. Apparently the government figured that the big cities needed more help than little rural locations like Benson and Whetstone. Those stupid SOBs didn't even realize we had 7 train loads of military equipment and supplies. Derek's friend Joe had made that possible, it was just a shame he couldn't get here.

Our AO covered the area from Tucson to about 40 miles east of Whetstone plus forty miles north and south or ~ 6,400mi². If you can find an old map of Arizona, you'll soon realize that it was mostly desert and mountains. That same map will also show you how few roads there were in the area. We could have had enemy combatants hiding anywhere and if they were wearing civilian clothes we may never have known.

What did you expect, a life and death struggle with bullets flying here, there and everywhere? You're half right, don't beat yourself up; it was a life and death struggle, our primary enemy being Mother Nature, not the Latinos. One thing you can say about nuclear winter and volcanic winter is that they're not over until they're over. The effect of the caldera eruption served to contain the nuclear summer, keeping the weather cool, almost too cold to grow crops where we were.

I did get a combat (tactical) wheelchair, the one I had couldn't support me, my gun rack and the weapons. It wasn't quite as heavy duty as the one I'd had in a previous story, it would only handle about 500 pounds, but I was slowly losing weight offsetting the additional weapons I insisted on carrying. I even had a small trailer to hold my spare ammo, rockets and grenades. Bill or Derek had replaced that standard wheelchair battery with a big one giving me as much as 12 miles cruising range compared to my previous range of ~5 miles.

"Considering the weather, the crops don't look bad, how much of our supply of seeds did you use?"

"About 10% Dad, we held back in case we don't get enough heat and water."

"The water comes from the well, so you're telling me what we really need is sunshine."

"Maybe... I have a feeling that we're not going to get any kind of crop this year."

"Why?"

"If I could answer that, we might be able to do something about. Darned if I know, it's just a feeling."

"Everything seems to be growing fine, despite the limited sunshine."

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch, this is far from over."

"What would happen if we didn't get a crop?"

"There'd be a lot of people relying on our store of MREs."

"I guess I got ahead of myself trading off those weapons. I was more concerned about another group like the last one showing up and trying to take what we have. As far as the acreage goes, I know there's enough food to get through for 2-3 years. It doesn't appear to be a problem though; the garden and fields are doing well."

I hadn't figured on the 9th disaster, just yet. We already had about as much as we could take as a nation, my only solace was more liberals died off than conservatives; maybe there was still time to save our Republic. I should have pulled my head out of the sand; there were forces out there that were going to 'save' us. You know the guys with the blue helmets. A few countries managed to avoid any serious damage from the war and were just now getting their act together, preparing to help us. Someone had invited them, guess who?

Sorry, that's not the disaster I was referring to; it first appeared in late summer. Our crops were doing so well; right up until the plants began maturing when something hit them, a blight of some kind. Blights have been with us for hundreds of years, remember the Irish Potato Famine? Perhaps Derek or Damon can explain it better than I; we'll get their input in a minute. At a particular point, each crop began to die off leaving us with nothing. According to the ham bands, this was widespread, affecting the entire country.

Suddenly, we had troops back on our southern border, this time erecting a blockade. Worse, Canada did the same thing, hoping against hope that whatever was ruining our crops didn't get theirs.

"Any idea what this is?"

"Some sort of blight, Dad. Blight refers to a specific symptom that can be expressed by plants in response to infection by a plant pathogenic organism. It is simply a rapid and complete chlorosis, browning, and then death of plant tissues such as leaves, branches, twigs, or floral organs. Most blights are caused by a fungus or a bacterium, each different according to the plant species involved. I don't get it, this is affecting everything."

"Have you asked Derek?"

"He's been pretty busy, Dad, why don't you try to pin him down?"

"I will if I can find him. Is it affecting every plant?"

"Yep."

"That's got to be unnatural, you don't suppose..."

"Suppose what?"

"Just thinking... what if those terrorists who spread the plagues also released some sort of engineered plant virus?"

"Jeez, I don't know, can you do that?"

"It wouldn't be simple. About all I know about growing plants is that you plant the seeds, add water and fertilizer and harvest the produce when it's ready."

"Derek said something about their discussing plant viruses when he had chemical weapons training, Dad; maybe you'd better ask him."

"Where is he?"

"Out on patrol again. He said he wouldn't send any of the men anywhere he wouldn't go."

"That reminds me of a song..."

*That famous day in history the men of the 7th Cavalry went riding on
And from the rear a voice was heard
A brave young man with a trembling word rang loud and clear
What am I doing here??*

*Please Mr. Custer, I don't wanna go
Hey, Mr. Custer, please don't make me go
I had a dream last night about the coming fight
Somebody yelled "attack!"
And there I stood with a arrow in my back.
Please Mr. Custer, I don't wanna go forward Ho!! aww*

*Look at them bushes out there
They're moving and there's a injun behind every one
Hey, Mr. Custer – you mind if I be excused the rest of the afternoon?*

*HEY CHARLIE, DUCK YER HEAD!!
Hmm, you're a little bit late on that one, Charlie
Hooh, I bet that smarts!*

*They were sure of victory, the men of the 7th Cavalry, as they rode on
But then from the rear a voice was heard
That same brave voice with the trembling word rang loud and clear
What am I doin' here??*

*Please Mr. Custer, I don't wanna go
Listen, Mr. Custer, please don't make me go
There's a redskin waiting out there, just fix'in to take my hair*

*A coward I've been called, cuz I don't wanna wind up dead or bald
Please Mr. Custer, I don't wanna go forward HO aww
I wonder what the injun word for friend is
Let's see—friend-- kemo sabe, that's it
KEMO SABLE! HEY OUT THERE—KEMO SABLE!
Nope, that ain't it*

*Look at them darned injuns
They're running around like a bunch of wild Indians-heh, heh, heh
Nah, this ain't no time for joking*

Whetstone – Chapter 25

We were still waiting for Derek to put in an appearance so we could find out about what was affecting our plants. He was out playing Custer. If he'd have taken his tank, I'd have probably accused him of being out playing Patton, a man we both admired. They left the tank and the artillery units sitting right where they were, they could always call back if they got in trouble. Most of the time they had 3 HMMWVs, equipped with the Mk19, a Ma Deuce and an M240. That's about as much firepower as they had on the Swift Boats back in 'Nam, hopefully it would be enough. However, I doubt they carried an 81mm mortar. Patrol Craft, Fast (PCF) Swift Boat, Eighty-four Mark I. I could be wrong, but I believe that's when they came up with what evolved into the Mk19.

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Dad always figured that I was too busy being a soldier to worry about civilian concerns. Wrong-O. Civilian concerns become military concerns when they affect the safety, security, and stability of the region. So when my finely-honed Iowa farm boy instincts homed in on the corn crop Dad was raising, a little investigating caused me enough alarm to go for a little trip.

Ever wonder how much of the average diet is grain-based? Corn, wheat and rice, among them, accounted for 87% of all grain production, worldwide, and 43% of all food calories in 2003. Several developing nations depend almost exclusively on cereal grains for their food supplies. What's more, most livestock feed is composed of ground grains.

My point? All major cereal grains grown in North America are cereal grains except buckwheat. That means that they are grasses, just like sorghum, sugar cane, and bamboo. To round things off, around 50% of the world's calories come from cereal grain and sugarcane.

That twitch that got me was a premature firing of the corn, before the ears had fully formed. It was followed by an ergot-like blackening of the seed. Thus I got my first inkling of Poalic grain blight.

Poales is order of flowering plants in the monocotyledons. The order contains true grasses, sedges, reeds, and bromeliads. Poalic Grain Blight was a broad-spectrum disease that killed any plant in order Poales. I had to find out more, and fast. My long patrol turned into a run for Iowa State University and some of the best horticultural scientists in the world. From what I was seeing on the way up to Iowa, it looked like we had an honest-to-goodness epiphytotic (plant epidemic) on our hands.

Now God could certainly manage to come up with such a disease, but I'm pretty sure that man came up with this one. It was more effective than aflatoxins in that it was self-propagating and ruined the entire annual crop of cereal grains in North America in a matter of weeks.

Iowa State University boasts one of the finest horticulture departments in the world. The scientists there are always figuring out the newest and greatest developments in agriculture before most of us normal folks have even heard of biotech hybrids that allow the farmer to directly spray them with Round-Up. Shoot, the anthrax strain involved in the mail-order terrorism several years back was the Ames strain first identified at the USDA veterinary facility in Texas, having been taken from a Texas beef. It had nothing to do with Ames, Iowa.

I figured that if anyone knew what was going on, the eggheads at Iowa State would if it was still there. So, I took a little road trip to Ames, Iowa. Along the way, I gathered as much data as I could on the move, including samples of various crops affected by the disease.

Wouldn't you know it? Ames was still there, and so were the eggheads. My military ID was still valid so I pretended to be one of the National Guardsmen ordered to gather samples (lucky, huh?) and learned whatever I could.

What I learned was:

1. The disease affected all members of order Poales. That included all cereal grains like wheat, rice, and corn.
2. The disease was not very effective at self-propagation through a hard freeze since it destroyed the seed in more than 90% of the cases. So one long winter should eliminate most of the threat.
3. The disease had no preventative treatment and no cure. The seed heads that showed signs of ergot-like growth could not be eaten or used for anything because the growth was a composite of carbon left over from the metabolism of starches and toxins.
4. The toxins produced were deadly to humans in amounts as little as 7 parts per billion and livestock in amounts of roughly 5 ppb per 100 pounds of bodyweight. For example, a 500 pound hog could eat as little as 25 ppb of infected grain and be killed.
5. Any livestock that consumed the toxin was inedible even if they did not die due to accumulated toxins stored in body fat. Infected livestock had to be slaughtered and the carcasses destroyed to prevent further circulation of the toxins in the food chain.

So, we faced a very broad spread famine. Farmers faced ruin on a scale unheard of before. Tens of millions of people would die from starvation worldwide.

Obama, the Husslin', Muslim responded by nationalizing food reserves.

Now, Dad grows some nice tomatoes. The Arizona dirt produced some decent potatoes, too. I was looking forward to telling him that his produce and livestock now belonged to Obama so that the Husslin' Muslim could make sure that the military was eat-

ing enough as they policed the areas under marshal (intentional misspelling) law (you know, the ones between the two oceans). Did anyone ever find his birth certificate?

◦

Before I was so rudely interrupted by the storyline, I was talking about the Mk19. The first version was a hand-cranked multiple grenade launcher called the Mk18. In 1966, the need for more fire power inspired the development of a self-powered 40-mm machine gun called the Mk19 MOD 0. This model was neither reliable enough nor safe enough for use as a military gun. Product improvements begun in 1971 resulted in the 1972 MOD 1, of which only six were produced. The MOD 1 performed effectively in Navy riverine patrol craft, and broader applications for the Mk19 were found. In 1973, the Navy developed the MOD 2, which featured improved reliability, safety and maintainability. In 1976, a complete redesign resulted in the Mk19 MOD 3, which the Army adopted in 1983. The Army uses the Mk19 within the tactical environment for defense, retrograde, patrolling, rear area security, MOUT, and special operations.

I listened to his explanation, twice. If I had it right, the corn, wheat and oats were a total loss, but the alfalfa was ok. Alfalfa is a legume so that means we'd get beans but the guy growing the rice was out of luck. As far as our garden crop went, it appeared we'd be ok, only losing the corn. He went on and on, talking about growing cotton, flax, Mulberry trees and what not. It really gave me a headache because I had no idea what Mulberry trees had to do with anything.

Mulberry (*Morus*) is a genus of 10–16 species of deciduous trees native to warm temperate and subtropical regions of Asia, Africa and North America, with the majority of the species native to Asia. Mulberry leaves, particularly those of the White Mulberry, are also economically important as the sole food source of the silkworm, the cocoon of which is used to make silk. The White Mulberry is native to Asia. So, take care of your silk garments, we nuked the crap out of China...

The problem with my kid is he sometimes thinks like me. When I was his age, I was always about a decade ahead of where I needed to be. The next thing you know, he'll be talking about tall cotton. I explained that I saw it on the History Channel... how you make denim out of cotton. The History Channel, Discovery Channel and National Geographic should be required watching for would be survivalists. If you need to break it up a little, watch the Military Channel, I did. They ran a show called *My War Diary*. It was about troops in Afghanistan and Iraq and made me happy I didn't go there.

At least it wasn't a total disaster; the livestock would have to eat leftover feed and fresh hay. We wouldn't have wheat or oats and the man down the road wouldn't get any rice. I hope you understood what Derek said, I'm not sure I did. If he's right, this virus won't survive the winter. However, the terrorist attacks took place almost 4 years ago, so I'm not so sure about that.

◦

Now that America has an Islamo-centric security posture, any danger that doesn't fit within the counter-fundamentalist framework tends to be ignored. That's sort of ironic, since the biggest military threats to democracy in the last century came from atheists.

Five years into the "global war on terror," the evidence suggested that Islamic radicals were real good at blowing each other up, but not so good at projecting power abroad. As long as western nations maintained halfway decent domestic security arrangements, the fundamentalists seem to be hobbled in repeating their one major success of Sept. 11, 2001. Given that fact – five years and counting without a second big terrorist attack in America – maybe we ought to be paying more attention to the kinds of state-based challenges that roiled the world so much in the past.

But we weren't. No one gave much thought to Russia's vast nuclear arsenal, which could still obliterate America in a few hours, even though that nation was reverting to authoritarian rule. Nobody seemed to care about China's buildup of naval forces, its development of long-range missiles, or its new fighter. And nothing decisive had been done to prevent North Korea's march towards an indigenous nuclear arsenal. Each of these countries wielded far more destructive power than the handful of nuts scattered across Arabia that we call al-Qaeda. But because al-Qaeda was a current irritant and other concerns seem less pressing, the capacity of US forces to cope with state-based challenges was allowed to atrophy.

The decay was most pronounced in the US Air Force, the service that would have to take the lead in coping with urgent threats posed by Russia, China and other industrialized countries. After 20 years of neglect, the Air Force's fleet of combat aircraft was older than the Navy's fleet of warships. During his four-year stint as defense secretary, current Vice President Dick Cheney killed the service's cold-war fighter programs, terminated the next-generation B-2 bomber at a mere 20 planes, slashed the future C-17 cargo plane program, and decimated every other facet of US air power.

Clinton's defense secretaries added back some planes that Cheney had cut, but delayed and decreased the next-generation F-22 fighter that was the centerpiece of plans for future air dominance. Then President Bush's long-serving Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld launched the entire US Department of Defense on a leap-ahead trajectory to military transformation that ignored air power for another six years.

The end result was that the US Air Force flew 45-year-old aerial refueling tankers using a plane retired by commercial airlines a quarter-century ago; its F-22 fighter program had been cut 75 percent even though the aging fighters it would replace were so old they operated under flight restriction; its production lines for C-130 and C-17 transport planes were scheduled for closure despite lack of adequate airlift; and the service had canceled its planned family of aircraft for replacing cold-war radar and reconnaissance planes. The only bright spot on the horizon was the tri-service F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, but Navy efforts to slash funding for JSF suggested the Air Force can't even count on that program going to fruition.

Air Force pilots have a favorite story they tell that captures the meltdown of American air power over the past 20 years. Brig. Gen. David Deptula was flying his F-15 over northern Iraq in 1999 when cockpit gauges went haywire and the fuel reading plummeted to zero. It turned out insulation on the plane's wiring had rotted away with age, shorting out the electrical system. The punch-line of the story was that Gen. Deptula was flying the same F-15 he had flown 20 years earlier as a young captain. But most of the people who tell the story don't know it has a new punch-line: Gen. Deptula's son, a first lieutenant, is now flying the same plane in the Pacific – nearly 30 years after it was built. Maybe it's time the Air Force finally gets some new planes, before a real threat comes along.

Unfortunately, they didn't...

Dust off is the term those in the military use to describe a helicopter rescue of a wounded soldier or Marine. The pilots are flat out crazy, flying into the face of death to extract the wounded. Nevertheless, it was a capacity that resulted in 97% of our wounded soldiers surviving in 'Nam. By Desert Storm and the 2nd Gulf War – GWOT – those figures had been increased, primarily due to the medical staffs available when the injured soldier or Marine reached the hospital. It was, in 2013, mostly a fleeting memory; we didn't have a pilot to fly the old, worn Huey we found.

However, the Lord works in mysterious ways, it turned out we did have a pilot – a former Army *dust off* pilot, no less. The man, Jack Woody, wasn't a spring chicken, he'd flown in 'Nam. He claimed he didn't say anything because he wasn't current, no longer had a flying license and had too many Huey's shot up in 'Nam. No, he insisted, he hadn't lost his nerve, and, yes, he could probably still fly a Huey in his sleep (gee, I hope he doesn't). He'd rather not, but if push came to shove, maybe...

We persuaded a mechanic familiar with the Iroquois to go over the bird and come up with a list of parts he'd need to get the bird in 'near perfect' condition. You'll have to realize two things: 1) we have a recovery specialist – his name is Damon; and 2) Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, with its AMARC facility, isn't that far away.

"Make sure your brother assigns a couple of squads to help you and provide security."

"Aw, Dad, I move better on my own."

"Make it 3 squads, want to go for a whole Platoon?"

"I'd better shut up while I'm behind."

"Do you have the list?"

"Yeah, what's he doing, rebuilding a Huey from a pair of skids?"

"Spare parts, son. They built those helicopters before you were born, he wants spares of everything."

"Where in Hell do I find a pair of M134 mini-guns?"

"Good question, they probably pulled the guns before they mothballed the birds."

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"Where in Hell do I find a pair of M134 mini-guns?"

"I said it was a good question, I'd DIDN'T say I knew the answer. Do a Gunny Highway thing."

"Yeah right, how am I going to improvise, adapt and overcome the need for a pair of M134s?"

"Don't forget the spare barrels."

"You didn't answer my question."

"I didn't think you'd notice."

The ammunition storage system for the new Dillon Aero M134D includes one magazine with a capacity of 4,400 rounds of linked 7.62mm percussion primed ammunition. The magazine weighs 31# empty, 295# full. It is a crew served, electrically driven, 6 barreled, rotary action, percussion fired weapon, with a maximum rate of fire of 6000 rounds per minute. In the current crew served application the rate of fire is selectable at either 2000 or 4000 rounds per minute. The gun produced an average recoil of 67.5kg and a peak of 135kg.

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The XM214 Automatic Gun (aka the Minigun) was developed for use mounted in and on helicopters and light aircraft. Like most GE Gatling gun type weapons it had six rotating barrels and the potential for an absolutely incredibly high rate of fire. It was electrically driven, and had a firing rate that could be adjusted from 1000 rpm all the way up to a 6,000 rpm. In addition to that, it could be set to fire bursts from 30 to 1000 rounds. A real drawback to the higher rates of fire was the huge ammunition usage (166 shots per second), and the power requirements, because firing it at full power it required some 3.2 hp to drive the barrel assembly.

First seen in the movie "Predator" in 1987, the hand-held Minigun has captured the hearts and minds of He-Men everywhere, be it in games or in real life. The very image

of Jesse Ventura as Blain, spraying bad guys with a veritable hail of bullets that issued forth from his Minigun Painless was so powerful that the weapon has been seen in both countless other movies and in games.

Even in real life the idea caught on surprisingly well. Apparently some of America's Special Forces guys saw Predator and realized that a hand-held Minigun would be a great asset for clearing out landing zones real fast. Having ample access to the needed equipment, they started experimenting. And ran into some problems.

The first was that the Minigun weighed in at thirty pounds, which was heavy, but carryable. A backpack with a thousand rounds of ammunition and a linkless belt to the Minigun weighed in at another thirty-five pounds. Backpacks with two thousand rounds weighed in at sixty-five pounds, and were totally unrealistic in size. Just the gun and the ammo weighed in at sixty-five pounds.

The second was that in the movie, the power for the Minigun had been supplied by a pair of truck batteries through a cable that simply ran over the ground, and up into the Minigun. Since those batteries weighed some 30 pounds each, it was obvious that only one could be carried by one person (in addition to all the other equipment the soldier was to carry). Thus, the weapon could never be fired at its full rate of fire.

The third problem was that even at "only" a 1000 rpm rate of fire the gun produces about 11 kg of recoil continuously! And this amount of force increases geometrically in proportion to the rate of fire. Firing a large burst would result in the gunner being spun around by his weapon, and spraying everything around him indiscriminately with bullets. Including his comrades...

After some experimenting it was thus realized that the gun would simply be too heavy and cumbersome to be ever used in real life combat, and the concept was abandoned. No army in the world has a hand-held Minigun in its arsenal.

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"Whetstone base, got your ears on?"

"Yeah, they're attached. What's up?"

"We have two old dudes here on I-10 at the west exit. They say they're headed to Tombstone to get hats."

"Did you get their names?"

"Ron and Clarence."

"Is one of them short and pudgy? The other tall and thin and black?"

"Do you know them?"

"Find out if their last names are Brown and Floyd."

"That's affirmative."

"Son-of-a-bitch. Escort the gentlemen to my house. Tell them that there's a tired old man who wants to see them."

"Wilco, we're 20 mikes out."

A fiery horse with the speed of light! A cloud of dust and a hearty 'Hi-Yo, Silver!'; Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear... the Three Amigos ride again! Hadn't seen Ron and Clarence since '07, figured they were probably both dead by now. Palmdale wasn't that far NE of LA, 70 miles from downtown and about 50 miles from the Valley.

"Hey you ugly old fart, I figured you were dead."

"Hey asshole."

"Gar-ree, good to see you. How have you been?"

"Clarence, I've just been sitting around getting old and counting my millions."

"Yeah right."

"No, really. You didn't know that Sharon and I won \$52 million in the Lottery?"

"When?"

"Back in '07. Paid off everything and got the Hell out of Palmdale. Ron knew; I left him a message on his phone."

"I never got no damned message, Lyn must have erased it."

"Where are Linda and Shirley?"

"Not everybody made it through those damned plagues, Gar-Bear. Linda caught the smallpox and died."

"Gary, Shirley got an overdose of radiation when they bombed the Harbors. She and my sister were down at Ports of Call Village shopping for Christmas presents. Lost both of them. I should have been with them, but Shirley didn't want me to see what she was buying me."

"Made a fresh pot of coffee and there's Sweet and Low in that little cupboard next to the coffee pot, help yourselves."

"Where did you get coffee?"

"We stored a lot of food in the shelter before TSHTF."

"But, it's been about 3 years since the war."

"So? When we were broke, we kept about a dozen cans. Imagine what I did when we were getting a million a year."

"They nuked Sacramento. Did you take a single payment or 26 years?"

"26 years."

"That was stupid. How many years' worth of payments did you get?"

"I, we, got it all. Sent some people to San Francisco and cleaned out the Mint."

"Gary, what's with the Army?"

"Those fellas are friends of Derek's, Clarence. Like the tank?"

"Hey, uglier than me, you got any 5.56?"

"I told you to buy a case or two from Ammoman."

"And, I told you I didn't have \$250 to spare."

"Still got the Kel-Tec SU-16?"

"Yes. I have the 5 magazines you got me too."

"Need more?"

"What I really need is a real assault rifle."

"What flavor? You can choose from, well hell, why don't I just show you? They're all stored in the shelter. Come with me."

"That's a long ramp."

"There's more to it than you can see."

"Gary, you're not using your wheelchair?"

"Only when I have to Clarence. Say, can you guys stay over, or are you in a hurry to get somewhere?"

"We were going to Tombstone to get hats."

"They don't have any. All of their hats are in one of those storage buildings. I have them for trade goods."

"Trade goods? What did you do, turn into J.C. Penny?"

"You want it; I got it, provided of course you have gold, silver or something to trade."

"Hey asshole, I've got something to trade. I'll trade not giving you a fat lip for a hat."

"Screw you, I was planning on giving you hats, but if you're going to act that way..."

"You love it and you know it."

"So help me I do. Even though I got a driver's license and have a pickup, I don't get out much and don't know most of the people in Whetstone or Benson. That dog that licked you is named Max. I'm afraid Missy got old and died, dammit. The other dog is named Duke and he's Sharon's dog."

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"Ok, the room on your right is the armory and that room over there has the gold and silver in it. The room to your left is the generator room and has the utilities, spare parts and things like that in it."

"How many did you have down here when you used it?"

Whetstone – Chapter 26

"Just the family, including Mary's family. That's Derek's wife, fellas. Anyway, they bought quite a bunch of stuff with them when they came. HMMWVs, transports and that pair of Paladins, plus we got about 7 trainloads of stuff a friend of Derek's shipped to them just before WW III."

"So here you sit with enough equipment for a small Army, two towns that you trade with and you have a ton of gold?"

"I have more than that, Clarence. Damn it's good to see the two of you. Could you please stay? I mean, hell, we can pull in trailers for you to live in, get you new furniture, hook you up to the utilities and I've got enough guns that you can have almost anything that you want."

"Gary, I thought I saw horses."

"You did. And no. I didn't name my horse Salina. Say, how bad did Kalifornia get hurt by Long Valley blowing up?"

"Bad enough we decided to come to Arizona."

"Where did you come from?"

"Palmdale. We didn't really get much fallout from the terrorist bombs and once they got everyone quarantined during the pandemics, both the pneumonic plague and smallpox died out. By the time the war came, I'd pulled the swimming pool and replaced it with a shelter. Clarence and I and our kids stayed there during the war."

"Yeah, Gary and then after the war, we in fair to middling shape. Scrounged around Palmdale and the Antelope Valley and found enough to get by. We were doing real well until that earthquake and tsunami up north. We both figured the San Andreas would let loose, but Long Valley blew up instead."

"Where are your kids?"

"Gar-Bear, they all headed to Baja, if you can believe that! Anyway, Clarence and I decided to see if there was anything left of the country. I remember when you got that hat in Tombstone and we thought we'd start there."

"Fellas, I can arrange an escort and we can have a look around the town. If you want any of the guns and stuff from Tombstone, help yourselves. We cleaned the gun stores and several other places out because they were abandoned. It isn't really safe to be out without an escort, a few of the leftover Latinos from the border war are still around. Plus I think we may have a group or two from the prisons that have moved into the area."

I unlocked the armory and both selected FX05s, M1911s, plus Colt .45s and Winchester carbines in .45 caliber. We sorted through the leather we'd collected and both found gun belts, holsters and scabbards for their carbines. I suppose we sat there most of the day talking about old times and how things had all turned out. Finally, Sharon called on our intercom and said supper was ready.

"Ron, Clarence, we're short on room, but I got you both rooms at the motel. Mary and Amy looked and found a pair of new trailers we can pull in, if you decide to stay. I hope steak, baked potato and mushrooms is ok for supper."

"You may not like it, Ron, it's not tri-tip."

"That place burned down. We've been eating lots of pasta, I hate it."

"So, Clarence, how many years do you have now?"

"Must be around 30, Gary, I quit counting. Are you still sober?"

"Gawd, I've got 15 years. There are times when I'd have killed for a drink, but it wasn't available. Now that it is, I'm not going down that road."

"That strip of buildings where they had the Palmdale Group, burned down too, Gar-Bear."

"What about High Desert Storm?"

"They closed up shop, couldn't get any more inventory."

"If you want to go back, I have around 100 Mauser's."

"Keep 'em, they're better than hunting with bows and arrows."

"You don't believe things will get better? Ron, you were always the optimist who told me I was foolish. I told you to buy a couple of cases of ammo and get a portable generator, it was never a question of if, just when and what."

"I still keep an eye on the sky, Gary."

"Waiting for the rock to pop out from behind the sun?"

"Why not, we've had about everything else happen. What's left?"

"Clarence, we could have a Supervolcano at Yellowstone, La Palma could slide off into the Atlantic, what's left of the Latin Armies could try a second invasion, FEMA could show up and try and put us in camps or we could be attacked by a prison gang."

"My luck, I'll get bit on the butt by a rattlesnake," Ron laughed.

"How's the steak?"

"Best meal we've had in 2 or 3 years. You grow all of your own food?"

"We try to. Thing is something affected all off the grass crops this year. We lost our corn, wheat and oats. The neighbor who was growing rice had the same problem."

"Are you going to be short of food, Gary? If that's the case, we'd better move on."

"Clarence, even with as many people as we have, we're good for this year and next. Those people in town will have to get by on MREs when they run out of food, don't worry, we have plenty. So, shall we move in a couple of trailers?"

"I suppose we could stay for a while Gar-Bear. What's your fuel situation?"

"We have lots of diesel and a fair amount of E-85. Before the two of you try to go see the country, you'd better talk to Derek. A bunch of them went out to check on the crop situation and checked out much of the Midwest. He can tell you what you're up against if you try to go sightseeing."

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From the time the good citizens of Kalifornia passed Prop 13, it wasn't a good place to live. That was back in '78, just before I moved to Davenport for the (Iowa) Department of Revenue. I had wanted to return to Kalifornia because I remembered what it was like in the '60s. By the time we made it in '82, Kalifornia was reaping what they'd sowed. The schools went from being tied with Iowa as the best in the nation to 50th place. The population of Kalifornia had soared with legal immigration. They also had a small problem with illegals. By the time Sharon and I won the Lottery, half of the homes in our housing tract were occupied with illegals.

One of the symptoms of what was happening was the 'white flight' to places like Reno, Las Vegas and Phoenix. I suppose I should point out that both Nevada and Arizona had one other blessing, reasonable gun laws. From what I've heard, the bottom of Lake Mead must be solid steel, what with all the guns that got lost on fishing trips. I'm rather certain that if we hadn't had the terrorist attacks and WW III, Obama would have succeeded in trying to seize many of the weapons.

It was what I told Sharon, 'Molon Labe!' I meant it too. They could have my guns only when they pried them from my cold, dead hands. To do so now, they'd have to get by the 155mm artillery and several trainloads of equipment and ordnance.

Arizona is the 48th state, a real late comer. Although the state had changed in 100 years, it hadn't changed as much as the original 13 colonies. Most of Arizona is Desert

County. Arizona is also known for its exceptionally hot summers and mild winters. Less well known is the pine-covered high country in the north-central portion of the state, which contrasts with the lower deserts of the state. I think maybe that northern area is on the Colorado Plateau. The Mongolian Rim is the edge of the Plateau. One of these days, we might get in the diesel Beemer and go sightseeing.

◦

Ron, Clarence and I were a matched set. Fleataxi gave us the name, The Three Amigos, probably based on the movie of the same name. For a long time, we were a tight group, but times change. I had sponsored Clarence's nephew, Fred, until he died. A well-meaning doctor had put Fred on Prednisone and it eventually killed him. Prednisone is a drug that must be used cautiously, it affects the adrenal glands. Steroids, such as prednisone, are often used to treat asthma, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and other inflammatory conditions. The drugs do wonders for symptoms, but at a price. When taken for more than a few months, steroids can cause bones to become brittle and break.

Back when I developed food allergies from too many years of drinking too much coffee, the ER frequently gave me a shot of epinephrine, another of ACTH and an Rx for 20 tabs of prednisone. I'd start with 4 tabs the first day, 3 per day for the next 2 days, 2 per day for the next 3 days and 1 a day for the next 4 days. I have some, although I'd have to think twice about using it, it raises a diabetic's blood sugar level. I suppose if I got a several allergy attack, I might do the 20 tab routine.

Speaking of drugs, I had a 6 month supply of everything before we won the Lottery. In addition, I had 500 Vicodin ES, about 700 0.5mg tabs of Xanax and 500 50mg capsules of Benadryl on hand at all times. There was also a bottle of 25mg capsules of Benadryl not to mention the KIO₃. Let me explain how that happened...

For a long time, we were so poor we relied solely on doctor's samples. Eventually, I got the insurance for Medicare Part D. That was no reason to stop getting doctor's samples and over the course of a year, I managed to build up a 6 month supply. After, I stopped getting the samples and rotated the drugs. One bottle of Vicodin would last the 3 of us about a year. I'd take in the empty Vicodin bottle and my doctor would write me a new Rx. He was a little casual and never indicated how many refills were allowed... I guess he trusted me. Anyway, it worked for me and after I had my stash built up, we started in doing the same thing for Sharon. BTW, I don't have any drugs to share.

◦

I told Mary to have the 2 singlewides pulled in and set. Ron and Clarence were driving a Nissan Titan, a flex fuel vehicle with the 5.6 liter V-8 Titan engine. We had a problem though; no corn meant no alcohol which meant no E-85, this year. We just have to get by with the 10,000 gallons we already had.

We didn't know it yet, but we were entering a period of reversal. Most of you know that after WW III, the odds favor the elimination of much of technology. In time, the satellites will stop working or fall to earth, no one will be building automobiles and there will be few food processors. For the prepared person, the transition will be mild, depending, of course, on your age. We seniors won't see a whole lot of the change and with any luck we'll get you younger folks started on the road to self-sufficiency.

My vision of the future doesn't see a lot of effective government for a very long time. That same vision sees at least two-thirds of the population eliminated. That still leaves 100 million of us, mostly shifting for ourselves. You can't make it on your own, while a small to middle sized group might. It's that old saw that there is security in numbers. However, with that comes a certain amount of insecurity, presuming there is in-fighting. If there is a major disparity between the haves and have not's, there is sure to be trouble.

The reason I brought that up was what I learned from Jerry D. Young in *Percy's Mission*. The best way to keep what you have is to share it. While Jerry and I may not agree on what weapons to include in our survival packages, we do agree on including guns. A gun doesn't do you a bit of good if you can't shoot it and clean it. Neither does it do you much good without ammo. Even back in Palmdale, I got a rifle and a couple cases of South African. I had enough oil to change the oil in my 7kw portable genset at least 10 times. I located a source and bought 2 pints of PRI-G.

Our shelves were fairly well stocked with enough food to last 6 months. The LDS Church recommends a 1 year supply, but a person has to start somewhere and I'm a Methodist. We had as much food as we had backup meds. We started out with some things and added others. IMHO, there is no such thing as being overly prepared. Just don't get so much of anything that it will spoil on you.

Desert Doc had a word or two to say on the subject of salvage. He made it clear that a person can only do so much salvaging. Seventh Fleet also offered an opinion, unless I've very much mistaken. No one man or woman can know everything there is that a person needs to know. Family is so very important, as are friends. With age comes patience and let me say, right here and now, that the value of patience can never be over-estimated.

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"Gary, you still telling stories?"

"Clarence, I never really stopped. Man, I can't say how much you've been missed."

"Hey uglier than me, I suppose you're already making plans for the 2 of us."

"Ronald McDonald, nobody is uglier than you. And sometimes, nobody is dumber. You just wouldn't listen to good advice, like how important it was to keep all of your important

immunizations up to date. Before you start to threaten to knock all my teeth out, you just sit your fat butt down and listen to a few things you should have considered."

"Gar-Bear, I listened more than you'll ever know. I'll admit that I probably should have done more to get ready, but that woman I was married to could be more stubborn than you can ever imagine. We were way ahead of you on stocking up on meds and you know it. When you didn't have a gun to your name, I had to buy a second and eventually a third gun safe. There were just some risks I couldn't take because of my background."

"Gary, you're too hard on Ron sometimes, you should give him some slack."

"Crap, we're all living on borrowed time, Clarence. At the moment, I can't afford to give anyone too much slack. Why aren't the two of you wearing the guns I gave you? There was a time when, if my rifle hadn't been leaning against my wheelchair, I'd have ended up dead. You both took those poodle shooters yesterday; today, I'm going to see to it you have some real guns."

"With all the guards you have around here?"

After they'd gone to the motel the previous evening, I'd returned to the shelter and got the last 2 remaining Loaded model M1As, 2 Tac-Force chest harnesses and 18 loaded magazines. I put 3 grenades each of the end pockets and took everything up to the house.

"Here, use a man's weapon."

"Is that your rifle?"

"One just like it, yes. You have 8 mags in the vest, one in the rifle and 3 hand grenades in each end pocket. We also have 2 cases of LAWs rockets in my study. From now on, you don't go anywhere without your rifle and handgun. Your rifles are in condition 3."

"What's that mean Gary?"

"Clarence, gun conditions are:

Condition 0 - A round is in the chamber, hammer is cocked, and the safety is off;
Condition 1 - Also known as 'cocked and locked', means a round is in the chamber, the hammer is cocked, and the manual thumb safety is applied;
Condition 2 - A round is in the chamber and the hammer is down;
Condition 3 - The chamber is empty and hammer is down with a charged magazine in the gun; and,
Condition 4 - The chamber is empty, hammer is down and no magazine is in the gun.

"All you have to do is pull back the operating rod to load the rifle."

"Do you have a scope on your rifle?"

"Not on my original rifle, no. I have a couple of the Super Match M1As and they have very good scopes. I've found that most of the time I do better without a scope. If it's a long range shot, I'll use a Super Match and match ammo. If you don't want the scopes, they're easy to detach."

"What's for breakfast?"

"Belgian waffles, bacon and orange juice."

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Clarence admitted he still kept an eye on the sky, a person could never be too careful. They were shocked yesterday when they found out we had coffee. Ron had been even more surprised that I had Sweet and Low. I told him that I'd never completely given up hope and as far as coffee went, when you're a millionaire, you can afford to stock up on the important things. I'd given them each a carton of Marlboros the day before, primarily to keep them from bumming my Kool's. Out in the shed were several cases of cigarettes but we didn't announce the fact. If you wanted something that was almost worth its weight in gold, it had to be cigarettes. However, a pack of cigarettes doesn't weigh that much.

After breakfast, I made sure they were properly dressed, ergo armed, and we went to check on their new trailers. The girls had been very busy, they'd stocked each trailer with food, ammo, smokes, linens and they had several pairs of jeans available so the fellas could dress in western attire. Next, we went to the building with the boxes of hats and got them each a genuine Stetson. It was the official hat everyone wore, especially the cavalrymen whose hats were different in that they were black and had been soaked in beer to break them in. Just to be contrary, I didn't wear my Stetson; there was nothing wrong with the black hat I had. Ron and Clarence both picked out grey hats.

"Everyone here wears a black hat, fellas."

"We're not from here, we're just visiting."

"Straddling the fence between being good guys and bad guys? The two of you lived in Kalifornia too long."

"We still do, Gar-Bear. It's a mite tough getting through the ash to our front doors, but we still have the property."

"Only 'til it rains. I hope you didn't leave anything you can't live without when you left."

"Brought all of my guns, if that's what you mean."

"It is. Clarence, bring your shotgun and .38?"

"Got 'em, but with the new guns you came up with, probably won't use 'em."

"Ready to go to Tombstone? Not much to see, but I can point out the OK Corral and other sights."

"We only wanted to go to Tombstone to get hats, asshole. Who cares where Quiet Burp had a gunfight?"

"I gave you Buffalo Bore ammo for the .45s; I have cowboy ammo if you're a wuss."

"Gary, do you have someplace we could go shoot the guns and get used to them?"

"Got a range. It's a combined pistol and rifle range, you can shoot from 7 meters out to 1,000 meters. Might be a good time to get out baby and see if I can still hit the bullseye."

"Baby?"

"McMillan Tac-50 with Raufoss ammo, Night Force scope, Magnum Universal Night Sight and Jet suppressor."

"Just had to go first class, huh?"

"I don't shoot it much, too damned heavy to carry."

"Can you hit anything at 600 yards?"

"Don't know, I can't find Geraldo."

o

It seemed like the 3 of us were all moving slower, I'd met Ron in '92 and Clarence in '95. By that time, Ron was on disability due to his bad heart. Clarence worked for Los Angeles County, probably leaning on a shovel. I had just quit my job with Iowa and was working for a CPA in San Francisco. I was the numbers guy; Ron knew propane and Clarence road construction and repair. None of these things were particularly applicable now, after the war.

We harvested all the food that could be saved from the blight and relied on stored goods to fill in the grass crops that had been destroyed. In a way, the blight had done us a favor, highlighting how precarious our situation truly was. The only food we had was the food we grew ourselves. Most of the things we took for granted would soon be totally unavailable – things like pharmaceuticals, all manufactured goods. Basically that meant that one of these days none of us would have the drugs that were keeping us alive.

Derek had brought that up when he needed a new uniform, they were hard to find. He told me that the Army considers the life of a pair of BDUs to be 6 months. I mostly wore jeans and found I could get ~5 years from a pair. Typically I kept 3 pairs of jeans so I always had something clean to wear. I had taken to wearing golf shirts a number of years ago and had plenty. Still, by the fall of 2013, our clothes were beginning to look a little threadbare.

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No way the country could experience 9 disasters is there? Ask the folks in Xenia, Ohio about that. That was the super outbreak, 148 confirmed tornadoes in 13 states and one Canadian province. In my home town, on May 15, 1968, a violent F5 tornado tore a ½ mile wide path through the town from south to north, killing 13 people, injuring over 1,000, destroying over 500 homes, 90 businesses, 8 churches and 3 schools. You don't hear about the worst tornado in Iowa history much, but I wrote National Geographic Channel anyway, asking if they were biased or ignorant.

Every one of the calamities I've described has the potential of happening, the real issue is timing. We've had terrorist attacks, wars with México, and just under 800,000 years ago, Long Valley blew its top. Cascadia has subducted before and half of the fault line was locked, just waiting to let loose again.

Before we won the Lottery, we were not very well prepared. I wanted the bomb shelter but couldn't afford it. Like most Americans with a bent toward preparedness, I did what I could to get us ready. Considering the odds of winning the Lottery, everything else in this story pales in comparison. By now you all know me well enough that you know how I'd spend the money, I'm just confirming it. Why would we leave Kalifornia? Because, I really would like to be able to own a .50 caliber rifle. Kalifornia doesn't much seem like it is part of the US anymore. The Governor was Arnold, a RINO. When we moved to Palmdale, we lived in a nice little housing tract, just a typical middle class neighborhood. In 2006, we couldn't speak to most of our neighbors, we didn't speak Spanish. Some of them might be legal, but I really doubt it.

◦

After the border war, there were the local Hispanics, soldiers from south of the border and the illegals. The soldiers must have known in advance about the planned attack, they moved south before the missiles started to fly. I really had no idea how many of our cities, military bases and infrastructure had been nuked, it had to be considerable. Ron and Clarence seemed to think that as many as a dozen locations in Kalifornia had been nuked.

"A dozen? I can see San Diego, LA, Santa Barbara, San Francisco and Sacramento. Where else did they bomb?"

"Beale AFB, Travis AFB, 29 Palms and Ft Irwin, for sure. I think maybe they hit Lemore NAS and Point Magu NAS. Where did they hit in Arizona?"

"Phoenix, of course; Tucson and I think they took out the Palo Verde nuclear generating station."

"And you've had to generate all of your own power since the war?"

"Right, that's why Derek stopped in Tehachapi and reallocated some of their wind turbines, we have twice as many as you see; the remainder is being held back for later."

"How long do they last?"

"About 20 years with proper maintenance. We should have enough to last through our lives and the kid's lives. It's some of the grandchildren that concern me."

"Gary, they will rebuild won't they?"

"Clarence, have you seen any sign of rebuilding? Have you seen any sign of cleanup?"

"Just locally in Palmdale after the war. Now they'll have to dig out from the ash from Long Valley."

"The only source of electricity in Palmdale was the wind turbine that belonged to the Water District. We managed to get a small generator from harbor Freight Tools, but it was a piece of junk."

"Didn't you check Costco? They had the PowerBOSS 7kw portable generators."

"Not by the time we got there, they didn't. We weren't getting any gasoline deliveries either. I know you used some kind of fuel stabilizer, where did you get it?"

"West Marine on Sepulveda Boulevard in Van Nuys. That idiot clerk they had didn't even know they carried it. I started out with 2 pints, enough for about 500 gallons of gas."

"About?"

"Well, yeah. The ratio is 1 ounce of PRI-G per 16 gallons of gasoline. I only had 5 gallon gas cans and had to compute the amount. It turned out to be 9.25ml per 5 gallon can. I used one of those measuring things that you use to measure medicine for kids. I got close, but it would have been better if I could have gotten 50 gallons of gas at a time."

Whetstone – Chapter 27

"You didn't buy gas drums?"

"I planned to, until we won the Lottery. We emptied the house out, got it repainted and sodded and came looking for a place in Arizona. We were headed towards Tombstone when we ran across Whetstone. Sharon talked to a realtor in Tucson; that's where she found the listing. We started out with 20 acres then added another 20 and finally another 40. It was expensive because it came with water and mineral rights."

"So what's the deal with your house in Palmdale?"

"Still own it, if it's still standing. I don't suppose you went by and checked it out did you?"

"Yeah, it's occupied, by Méxicans."

"Why am I not surprised?"

"You're never going back there, are you?"

"Ron, I can't see any reason why I'd want to. I can't see any reason why the two of you would want to go back. If your kids all went to Baja, you may never see them again. If you wanted, we could put together a mission to go and look for them. Unless you know almost exactly where they ended up, we might never find them. Hell, considering our age, we'd be better off just staying here. As far as meds goes, we probably have some of what you take, we cleaned out several pharmacies. I don't know how long they'll last, but you're more than welcome to them."

"Gary, we did want to see some of the country."

"We have always wanted to see it too. I don't know about now, though, it might be risky."

"I don't see why, you have all of those Hummers with machineguns. Couldn't we take a couple of them for security and go sightseeing?"

"Gee, I don't know. We have to take one or two fuel haulers, a couple of supply trucks, the Hummers plus several operators. It could get very complicated. I think the first step would be to run it by Sharon. If she's willing, we'd have to run it by Derek, he's in command of the military group. Are you sure you want to do this, we don't know what we're going to run into?"

o

"You want to go where?"

"We want to go see the country. Ron and Clarence will only stay for a while and then they plan to move on. Clarence pointed out that we had Hummers with machineguns for security. I told him we'd have to take several trucks to haul fuel and supplies. I think it's my last chance to do something with the guys."

"Have you talked to Derek about this?"

"Not yet, I wanted to get your approval first. If you agree, I'll have to try and work out the details with him."

"Well, it seems like we're stuck here whether we like it or not. Most of the things I'd want to see probably aren't there anymore. How long would you plan on being gone?"

"For as long as it takes, it could be up to a year."

"I'm not going on a yearlong road trip. If you really want to, go ahead. I can take over your banker responsibilities until you get back."

"Then, it's ok?"

"I'd rather you didn't, but you're 70 and a little old for anyone to tell you that you can't do something."

o

"How would you make this trip, Dad?"

"We'd probably take I-10 to Jacksonville, Florida, I-95 to New York and pickup I-80. That would get us to San Francisco and we could take I-5 south to I-10 and return home."

"You'd probably hit almost every major city that got nuked in the war."

"We might, but we're really not sure which cities were hit."

"I don't know that I like the idea. Most of the major cities on your route were probably nuked. You have no intelligence on what you might be up against. You'd need either a tanker or two HEMTT fuel haulers, a HEMTT for food supplies and another for ordnance. I suppose you'd want 2 HMMWVs with Ma Deuces and one with a MK-19. Did I miss anything?"

"I don't think so, no. We'd want to take our own generator with us so we had electrical power."

"Where would you stay?"

"Probably in motels and if there was anyone around, I'd have the means to pay for the lodging."

"How many personal vehicles?"

"Probably one, my pickup. I think it would be better if all of our vehicles were diesels."

"You're talking about 8 vehicles. You're probably talking 10,000 miles give or take. If I figure 10mpg average you'd need at least 8,000 gallons of fuel. Dad, that's a lot of fuel for a pleasure trip."

"Can you make it happen?"

"I'd only ask for volunteers. Let me look into it and I'll get back to you."

o

"Well?"

"Sharon said ok, but she won't come with us. Derek is seeing if he can get enough volunteers to drive the vehicles. We're just going to have to wait and see."

"If he can't work it out, let us know, we can still go on our own."

"Sure. You guys are lucky, you know. I hate steak and Sharon loves it. Having the two of you over for dinner every night means she can serve steak and I can like it or lump it."

"What is your favorite food, Gary?"

"Don't have one, Clarence. That diabetic neuropathy took out my taste buds; it all tastes about the same. Worse, the things I do like give me indigestion."

o

I looked at the map and figured if we got as far as El Paso, we'd be doing outstanding. If we could get past El Paso, surely San Antonio wouldn't hold us up. It was hard to tell from the map I had, but most of the journey looked like open desert. I figured that meant it was farming country once we got to Texas.

Truthfully, I'd have rather taken a sharp stick in the eye than see America. We didn't have to go any further than Tucson to see post war ruins. It's hard to judge the country from one city, but in the 3 years since the war, there hadn't been much done to clean up Tucson. What was left had been thoroughly picked over, about the only reason to go there was for spare parts for a vehicle, if you could find them.

We had rebuilt the smaller generator and serviced the larger generator. If the wind didn't blow, we'd still have power. Soy beans are a legume, we'd have biodiesel but no crops to produce alcohol. We'd finally set up those biodiesel converters and were running them 24/7. Each unit produced 55 gallons of diesel in 3 hours. Given the transition time, that meant about 5 loads a day times 4 or 20 loads of 55 gallons a day. It didn't take long to go through the soybean oil.

How much fuel do you use in a year? Figure 25,000 miles and 15mpg and the answer is: 1,667 gallons. Except we were stay at home folks who probably didn't drive 10,000 miles a year: 667 gallons. I had to use PRI-D in our fuel tanks to keep the fuel fresh. By the time we had the soybean oil converted, we were out of storage places. The way Derek's bunch was running through fuel, it was a temporary problem.

After batting it back and forth Derek announced that he couldn't provide an escort for us to tour the county. He also threatened to sit on me if I insisted on going. He would, he said, provide Ron and Clarence a fuel trailer with 1,000 gallons of fuel and enough rations to last them for the trip.

"Sorry, partner, I can't go with you. You've got food, fuel, guns and ammo; however, I think you should reconsider."

"It was just dumb luck we ran into you in the first place, Gar-Bear. Are you going to let your kid tell you what you can and can't do?"

"I have obligations to the people here in Whetstone and Benson, fellas. I looked at the map and from here to San Antonio; you'd only go through a couple of large cities. I'll make sure you have everything you need, but I won't go with you. Neither of you seem to like the M1As so you can give them back and I'll give you some Mauser's as trade goods."

"Tell Derek to load us up and we'll leave tomorrow."

One minute they were here and a minute later, they were gone. I sure hoped they stop back here when their trip was over. I told Mary to clean up the trailers and keep them ready for the fellas return, although I had little confidence I'd ever see them again.

o

Apparently that blight was a one-time deal intended to starved us all to death. If it had been better timed, it could have. Starting that fall we got many more people coming into the area trying to find food. There is a limit to Christian charity, although it's hard to say exactly what that is. Perhaps if someone is honest and says they're starving but are willing to work to earn food, one might be inclined to find some work. On the other hand, when they come in guns first, they get an entirely different reaction. I burned through the South African and was now using Lake City surplus. As bad as it must sound to you, we had a large pit and a truckload of quicklime (CaO). The quicklime helped with the stink.

Word must have somehow gotten out that the people in our area had food. The grapevine also must let them know that we were more than willing to fight to keep what we had. Sometime just before Christmas 2013, a very large group came in on I-10 from the west. The freeway and ditches had been blocked with those portable concrete medians. It was a short shot for the Paladins and a medium to long shot for the M1A3E3.

"Condition Black, we have a large group on west 10."

"How many?"

"Too many to count."

"Are they peaceful or looking for trouble?"

"What, you can't hear the guns firing? We need help here, bring up the tank."

Our artillery was pre-sighted (registered) for several distinct locations, like every place we had barricades and troops. We were using M795 projectiles, the replacement round for the M109. A Paladin is capable of a maximum rate of fire of 4 rounds per minute and a sustained rate of fire of 1 round per minute. I think maybe the barrels get hot or something. I can't tell you because the Air Force didn't have cannons when I was in.

"Target Zone A, fire for effect. Start close in and work the rounds back until the forward observer tells you to move them forward again."

"Right, L-T. You gonna take that tank and have some fun?"

"Bill will be in charge until I return."

In this case, close in meant ~200 meters in front of the barricades. The rounds they were using had the CCF (Course Correcting Fuse). The CEP was probably about 50 meters. To put it bluntly, that meant there was an area free of artillery fire that these bad guys were all trying to crowd into.

"Gunner, Beehive, Troops! Fire And Adjust! Caliber .50!"

"Damn L-T, that's some nasty chit."

"I like it; it gives them over 1,000 reasons to change their minds!"

The artillery was working its way back in the column and the tank was mowing down those in the front. A LAW rocket simply bounced off the frontal armor of the tank. While it was possible to destroy an Abrams with a rocket, you could only do it from the side or the back.

That battle didn't last long, although we did lose one HMMWV, to a LAW rocket. We were able to salvage the M240, so it wasn't a complete loss. I figured this was our practice battle, when Obama figured out we had food, we'd be fighting the US Army. They didn't know what we had; we kept it under camouflage netting. You don't suppose they sent those people so they could evaluate our defenses, do you?

I'd better back up and give you more of the details of the fight. We had 4 dead and 37 wounded. For the first time, we hadn't gotten away unscathed. The opposing force had about a 50% fatality rate from the initial combat and a 100% fatality rate after we'd checked the wounded. I think Derek said that about half of their wounded would have died without treatment. Does putting them out of their misery qualify as Christian charity? I don't know, but they shot first. Condition Black? We were using the system the US military used in Iraq to identify roads: Green, Yellow, Red and Black.

o

I had hoped we'd avoid dealing with the government. After Derek's secret trip to Iowa (it was a secret to me) we pretty much knew what we were facing. As long as we used our seed, we'd be ok unless the wind brought in that what-you-call-it toxin, Poallic Grain Blight. Hell, I couldn't even pronounce it.

Anyway, one model of the M1A rifle is known as the 'White Feather', the M25. The name comes from Carlos Hathcock, the US sniper in 'Nam. Hathcock didn't actually use an M25; he used the Winchester Model 70 chambered in .30-06 Springfield as his sniper rifle of choice (The pre-64 Winchester Model 70s the US Marine Corps used before adopting the Remington Model 700 were chambered in .30-06 Springfield).

Did you ever wonder why the announcer's voice on the military channel sounds so familiar? Like James Earl Jones voice over for CNN was so famous, Dennis Haysbert was the announcer beginning in 2004. You know him; he used to do Allstate ads and played *Jonas 'Snake Doctor' Blane* in *The Unit*. You might have seen him in *Goodbye Bafana* where he played the role of Nelson Mandela (2007). Or, you might have seen him in *Breach* (2007), which was based on the true story, FBI upstart Eric O'Neill enters into a power game with his boss, Robert Hanssen, an agent who was ultimately convicted of selling secrets to the Soviet Union. Haysbert played Dan Plesac.

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The U212 submarine is capable of long-distance submerged passage to the area of operation. The German Navy has ordered four of the submarines.

The Type 212 is being constructed by Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft GmbH (HDW) of Kiel and Thyssen Nordseewerke GmbH (TNSW) of Emden. HDW is responsible for the bow sections and TNSW for the stern section. HDW is assembling the first and third vessels, TNSW the second and fourth. U31, the first of class, was launched in March 2002 and commissioned in October 2005.

The second, U32, was launched in December 2003 and was also commissioned in October 2005. The third, U33, was launched in September 2004 and commissioned in June 2006. U34 was launched in July 2005 and was scheduled for delivery by the end of 2006.

In September 2006, the German Navy ordered two further U212 submarines, to be delivered in 2012/2013. The new vessels will have improved network-centric communications, combat system and sensors.

Two U212 submarines are being built by Fincantieri for the Italian Navy. The first, S526 Salvatore Todaro, was launched in November 2003 and was commissioned in June 2005. The second, Scire, was launched in December 2004 and was commissioned in 2007.

The Type 212 is equipped with a highly integrated command and weapons control system which interfaces with sensors, weapons and navigation system. The system is based on a high-performance databus and a distributed computer system, the Basic Command & Weapons Control System (Basic CWCS) supplied by Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace of Norway under the trade name MSI-90U.

There are six torpedo tubes in two groups of three. Type 212 is equipped with a water ram expulsion system for torpedo launch. The submarine is equipped with the DM2A4 heavyweight torpedo weapon system from Atlas Elektronik.

EADS Systems & Defence Electronics and Thales Defence Ltd have been awarded a contract to develop the FL1800U electronic warfare system for the German and Italian Navies' U212 submarines. The 1800U is a submarine version of the FL1800 S-II which is in service on the Brandenburg and Bremen Class frigates.

A consortium led by ATLAS Elektronik and ELAC are responsible for the development of the TAU 2000 torpedo countermeasures system. TAU 2000 has four launch containers, each with up to ten discharge tubes equipped with effectors.

The effectors are small underwater vehicles, similar in appearance to a torpedo. The effectors are jammers and decoys with hydrophones and acoustic emitters. Multiple effectors are deployed in order to counter torpedoes in re-attack mode.

The submarine is equipped with an integrated DBQS sonar system which has: cylindrical array for passive medium-frequency detection; a TAS-3 low-frequency towed array sonar; FAS-3 flank array sonar for low- / medium-frequency detection; passive ranging sonar; and hostile sonar intercept system. The active high-frequency mine detection sonar is the Atlas Elektronik MOA 3070.

The search periscope is the Zeiss Optronik SERO 14 with optical rangefinder, thermal imager and global positioning system. The Zeiss SERO 15 attack periscope is equipped with laser rangefinder.

The propulsion system combines a conventional system consisting of a diesel generator with a lead acid battery, and an Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, used for silent slow cruising, with a fuel cell equipped with oxygen and hydrogen storage. The system consists of nine PEM (Polymer Electrolyte Membrane) fuel cells, providing between 30kW and 50kW each.

For higher speeds, connection is made to the high-performance lead acid battery. An MTU 16V-396 diesel engine powers the generator from Piller GmbH for charging the battery installed on the lower of the two decks at the forward section of the submarine.

The diesel generator plant is mounted on a swinging deck platform with double elastic mounts for noise and vibration isolation. The propeller motor is directly coupled to the seven-bladed screwback propeller.

HDW has developed the Type 214 submarine, which is a further improvement on the Type 212. The Greek Navy has ordered three Type 214 submarines. The first, Papanikolis (S120), was built at the HDW Kiel shipyard and was launched in April 2004. It is scheduled to commission in 2006.

Hellenic Shipyards will build the second (Pipinos S121) and third (Matrozos 122) vessels at Skaramanga, for commission in 2008-09. Hellenic Shipyards was acquired by HDW in May 2002. A fourth vessel, Katsonis (S123), was ordered by Greece in June 2002 and is expected to commission in 2010.

South Korea has also ordered three Type 214, to enter service in 2007, 2008 and 2009. These are being built by Hyundai Heavy Industries. The first, to be called Admiral Sohn Won-il, was launched in June 2006. The submarines will form the KSS2 Class.

The Type 214 will have an increased diving depth of over 400m, due to improvements in the pressure hull materials. Hull length is 65m and displacement 1,700t. Four of the eight torpedo tubes will be capable of firing missiles.

Type 214 submarines for the Hellenic Navy will be armed with the WASS (Whitehead Alenia Sistemi Subaquei) Black Shark heavyweight torpedo. The Black Shark is a dual-purpose, wire-guided torpedo which is fitted with Astra active / passive acoustic head and a multi-target guidance and control unit incorporating a counter-countermeasures system. It has an electrical propulsion system based on a silver oxide and aluminum battery.

Performance of the AIP system has been increased with two Siemens PEM fuel cells which produce 120kW per module and will give the submarine an underwater endurance of two weeks. A hull shape which has been further optimized for hydrodynamic

and stealth characteristics and a low-noise propeller combine to decrease the submarine's acoustic signature.

The Integrated Sensor Underwater System ISUS 90, from ATLAS Elektronik integrates all sensors, command and control functions on board the submarine. BAE Systems provides the Link 11 tactical data link. The sensor suite of the U214 submarine consists of the sonar systems, an attack periscope and an optronic mast. The submarine's electronic support measures system and global positioning system sensors are also installed on the optronic mast.

It's the quietest submarine in the world when it's running on fuel cells. The first operational submarine was built by the US in the eighteenth century. A second was built during the nineteenth century and Holland made them work in the early twentieth century. Germany built the most and the best through 1945,

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"I'm confused, who is the enemy?"

"We have several, Dad – do you want a breakdown?"

"Start at the top and work your way to the bottom. Go slow, or I'll have to write it down."

"At the top of the heap are Obama, the Husslin' Muslim. Next in line would be the starving people all over the county. Third, and probably final, are the leftover Latinos."

"Crap. I let my 2 amigos go out in that?"

"How could you stop them? You old guys are all alike, bullheaded! If they manage to avoid getting their butts shot off, maybe they'll be back."

I can't remember anymore, but I think Ron is the oldest followed by Clarence and I am the youngest. It might not be important, but after the shoot out last week, I became very conscious of my age. Next birthday, I'll be 71, I should live so long. Ron and Clarence would be lucky to outlive me, all they had were FX05s.

◦

We couldn't recover all of the weapons this time, you'd be surprised what those canister rounds do to a weapon. The attackers had been organized to a degree; the guys in front mostly had AKs or a variation. Those variations included the AKM, SKS, AKS and the rifles built in China, the type 56, etc. What they had in common was the 7.62x39mm cartridge. Some were real junk and some really good rifles. I didn't bother with the Commie guns; I was looking for a few good men who had real rifles, either the Garand or the M1A. About the only foreign gun I'd consider were the FN FALS and the H&K

firearms. That included the G3, HK91, HK93 and the G36. The 93s and 36s were more out of curiosity, they're .223s.

With a little help from Damon and Aaron, we managed to collect ~40 rifles. 15 of them were M1As, I was in heaven. There were other 7.62 NATO rifles, 7 to be specific. I could clean a G36 but the HKs and FN FALs required a new learning tree, despite being a modified G3. At least these guy had a fair number of magazines, finding a rifle with only a couple of magazines was frustrating, to say the least. We found 25 of the 1,260 round cases of South African, a real bonus.

On the list of the top 10 military firearms of all times the M14 came in 10th, the Mattel toy gun came in second and the AK first. I didn't care what the Military Channel thought; the M14 rifle would have been near the top if it had a longer service life. It was basically a Garand that had been modified to accept a box magazine and new cartridge. The Garand only came in 4th. That's pathetic. Adopted in 1959 and mostly replaced by the toy gun by 1970, it remains THE WEAPON OF CHOICE for many operators. Did I mention that the US military is still buying them?

The town folks were having a heyday collecting the usable weapons. Damon tried to grab as many of the LAW rockets as he could but we had those and I was more interested in the rifles. Still, he didn't do too badly; he collected 60 of the LAWs and another 24 of the M136 AT-4s. The thing I like about the LAW rocket is that it gives you a miniature, highly portable cannon.

Although the new M72 family of weapons is designed primarily to defeat light armor, these weapons retain a moderate capability against main battle tanks when engaged from top, side and rear angles of attack. They are also effective against concrete and brick walls, as well as both hasty and prepared field fortifications.

These next generation M72LAWs are affordable, highly proliferable weapon systems, compatible with the needs of most modern armed forces. The new M72LAWs offer greater lethality, increased range, better accuracy, and more versions of the M72. These improved capabilities are provided without significantly increasing system size, weight, complexity, or cost. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the military ordered more of the LAWs rockets. They were a slightly improved version with a slightly improved range and more accurate fire. Regardless, the main thing was you could carry from one to three of them on the wheelchair.

Back in the late '70s and early '80s, one of the big gun debates (besides the perpetual battle to preserve the 2nd Amendment) was which was a better rifle: the HK91 or the FN-FAL? Both the M14 and .308 Galil were rarely mentioned in these debates.

Whetstone – Chapter 28

Remember, we're talking pre-SR 25 days when the HK91 was \$350-\$400 apiece.

Function? The HK91 is based on the roller locked delayed (or retarded) blowback action. Brass must be a certain hardness or the barrel fluted for it to function properly (the latter is done). It shares the same operating system as found on the MP-5 SMG. Like Rich says, the HK is a dependable system. HKs are tougher on the brass than the FN-FAL so if you're a reloader, be warned. They are very durable and were known for their accuracy. Gee, they even made a couple sniper versions of it too and because of its operating system was easier to make into a successful sniper rifle (fewer operating parts). The receiver did have to be stiffened to reduce the twisting on firing. Getting back to the HK91, gun for gun I think they're more accurate than the FN.

The FN-FAL is a gas operated system which, thanks to its four position gas system, may be adjusted to various loads - which makes it less ammunition sensitive than the HK (or the M14). Attempts to make this rifle into a sniper arm was not as successful as for the HK (too many moving parts to contend with).

Handling qualities: The FN feels nice, balanced and very comfortable. The HK, thanks to its bolt carrier, is top heavy (scope it and its worse). The HK jungle handguard is bulky and even worse if you put the bipod on (but it promotes faster barrel cooling than the HK slimline forearm): cocking - handle is on the receiver and closer to the hand on the FN. On the HK, handle is on the tube mounted above the barrel and requires an extension of the arm to cock it. Not that I've ever found it to be a disadvantage. Overall, I'd give the FN the advantage here.

Of course, you should also consider other tangible factors: scope (my guess is about \$100 for a scope base for the FN-FAL and about \$350 for an A.R.M.S. scope base for the HK); extra-large capacity magazine prices (about the same for both - \$20), carrying handle (use to be standard on the FN and option on the HK - which means extra money and if you want the ejection port buffer, I don't think you can put the carrying handle on); Sights - there are a couple of optional iron sights for the FN, but the HK has an optional 1200 meter iron sight which is very nice (and will cost you over \$100); Slings - the HK is more versatile especially with the ambidextrous sling swivels and that wonderful multi-use web sling of theirs. Of course, you can always buy a combat sling for the FN; 22 conversion kits - may still be available for the HK but pricey (cheaper to buy a 10/22). HK use to make it for the FN-FAL, but I don't know if any were imported into this country.

Servicing: Well, it's easy to do simple armorer's work on the HK with a few punches. I don't really think you need many screwdrivers except for the sights and maybe for disassembling the stock (why would one ever do that?). Specialized tools are too pricey for even most gunsmiths to consider (receiver tube straightener, jigs to swage in barrels) and that stuff is best left to H&K. There are surplus parts kits, but these are from retired (and probably worn) service rifles. Service manuals - I guess you can find them at gun

shows and they use to be around all the time. BTW, the trigger group is not that hard to disassemble, but don't try it with a Set-Trigger of the MSG90 or PSG-1. You have to be a clockmaker to understand their set trigger and even my instructor had to pull a fresh one off the shelf to reassemble one.

FN-FAL requires about a dozen tools for a basic armorer's kit (about \$150 I guess) and like the HK, really isn't too hard to work on. Parts are easier to come by for the FN but you should be careful about inch v. metric v. Isahpore. Another advantage is that there's a domestic source for new receivers here in this country. It is unknown whether they obtained blue prints from FN or whether it is a product of reversed engineering. Manuals are out there and an excellent book to supplement it with is Blake Steven's \$110 masterpiece, *The FN-FAL Rifle*.

o

War is hell. But it's worse when the Marines bring out their new urban combat weapon, the SMAW-NE. Which may be why they're not talking about it, much.

This is a version of the standard USMC Shoulder Mounted Assault Weapon but with a new warhead. Described as NE - "Novel Explosive"- it is a thermobaric mixture which ignites the air, producing a shockwave of unparalleled destructive power, especially against buildings.

A post-action report from Iraq describes the effect of the new weapon: "One unit disintegrated a large one-story masonry type building with one round from 100 meters. They were extremely impressed." Elsewhere it is described by one Marine as "an awesome piece of ordnance."

It proved highly effective in the battle for Fallujah. This from the Marine Corps Gazette, July edition: "SMAW gunners became expert at determining which wall to shoot to cause the roof to collapse and crush the insurgents fortified inside interior rooms." The NE round is supposed to be capable of going through a brick wall, but in practice gunners had to fire through a window or make a hole with an anti-tank rocket. Again, from the Marine Corps Gazette:

"Due to the lack of penetrating power of the NE round, we found that our assault men had to first fire a dual-purpose rocket in order to create a hole in the wall or building. This blast was immediately followed by an NE round that would incinerate the target or literally level the structure."

The rationale for this approach was straightforward:

"Marines could employ blast weapons prior to entering houses that had become pillboxes, not homes. The economic cost of house replacement is not comparable to American lives...all battalions adopted blast techniques appropriate to entering a bunker, assuming you did not know if the bunker was manned."

The manufacturers, Talley, make bold use of its track record, with a brochure headlined "Thermobaric Urban Destruction."

The SMAW-NE has only been procured by the USMC, though there are reports that some were 'borrowed' by other units. However, there are also proposals on the table that thousands of obsolete M-72 LAWs could be retrofitted with thermobaric warheads, making them into effective urban combat tools.

But in an era of precision bombs, where collateral damage is expected to be kept to a minimum, such massively brutal weapons have become highly controversial. These days, every civilian casualty means a few more "hearts and minds" are lost.

Thermobaric weapons almost invariably lead to civilian deaths. The Soviet Union was heavily criticized for using thermobaric weapons in Afghanistan because they were held to constitute "disproportionate force" and similar criticisms were made when thermobarics were used in the Chechen conflict. According to Human Rights Watch, thermobaric weapons "kill and injure in a particularly brutal manner over a wide area. In urban settings it is very difficult to limit the effect of this weapon to combatants, and the nature of FAE explosions makes it virtually impossible for civilians to take shelter from their destructive effect."

So it's understandable that the Marines have made so little noise about the use of the SMAW-NE in Fallujah. But keeping quiet about controversial weapons is a lousy strategy, no matter how effective those arms are. In the short term, it may save some bad press. In the long term, it's a recipe for a scandal. Military leaders should debate human rights advocates and the like first, and then publicly decide "we do/do not use X". Otherwise when the media do find out – as they always do – not only do you get a level of hysteria but there is also the charge of "covering up".

The good news is Human Rights Watch is a distant memory. The better news is that some of the M72s had thermobaric warheads. We didn't find any of the SMAWs, but we didn't really know what we were looking for.

Volumetric weapons include thermobaric and fuel-air explosives (FAE). Both thermobaric and FAE operate on similar technical principles. In the case of FAE, when a shell or projectile containing a fuel in the form of gas, liquid or dust explodes, the fuel or dust like material is introduced into the air to form a cloud. This cloud is then detonated to create a shock wave of extended duration that produces overpressure and expands in all directions. In a thermobaric weapon, the fuel consists of a monopropellant and energetic particles. The monopropellant detonates in a manner similar to TNT while the particles burn rapidly in the surrounding air later in time, resulting in an intense fireball and high blast overpressure. The term "thermobaric" is derived from the effects of temperature (the Greek word "therme" means "heat") and pressure (the Greek word "baros" means "pressure") on the target.

Thermobaric compositions are fuel rich high explosives that are enhanced through aerobic combustion in the third detonation event. Performance enhancement is primarily achieved by addition of excess metals to the explosive composition. Aluminum and Magnesium are the primary metals of choice. The detonation of Composite Explosives can be viewed as three discrete events merged together. All three explosive events can be tailored to meet system performance needs:

1. The initial anaerobic detonation reaction, microseconds in duration, is primarily a redox reaction of molecular species. The initial detonation reaction defines the system's high pressure performance characteristics: armor penetrating ability.
2. The post detonation anaerobic combustion reaction, hundreds of microseconds in duration, is primarily a combustion of fuel particles too large for combustion in the initial detonation wave. The post detonation anaerobic reaction defines the system's intermediate pressure performance characteristics: Wall/Bunker Breaching Capability.
3. The post detonation aerobic combustion reaction, milliseconds in duration, is the combustion of fuel rich species as the shock wave mixes with surrounding air. The post detonation aerobic reaction characteristics define the system's personnel / material defeat capability: Impulse and Thermal Delivery. Aerobic combustion requires mixing with sufficient air to combust excess fuels. The shock wave pressures are less than 10 atmospheres. The majority of aerobic combustion energy is available as heat. Some low pressure shock wave enhancement can also be expected for personnel defeat. Personnel / material defeat with minimum collateral structure damage requires maximum aerobic enhancement and the highest energy practical fuel additives: Boron, Aluminum, Silicon, Titanium, Magnesium, Zirconium, Carbon, or Hydrocarbons.

Thermobaric materials can provide significantly higher total energy output than conventional high explosives. The majority of the additional energy is available as low pressure impulse and heat. I think we're going to need those weapons, we have food. If Obama came looking, we'd need nuclear weapons!

You may recall that one of the new munitions for the M25 was also thermobaric. Derek couldn't understand why we needed thermobaric grenades or rockets. In MOUT operations, they'd be the perfect weapon for clearing a house or whatever.

But I was talking about the guns we recovered before I distracted myself, wasn't I? 22 of the 40 rifles we recovered were 7.62x51mm. All were serviceable and had enough extra magazines. Plus we had more than a case of ammo per rifle. Damon and I took the guns and ammo to Ron's trailer along with the 60 LAWs and 24 M136s. He helped me get an empty Mauser rifle rack from the shelter and we proceeded to clean the weapons, setting up an armory in a spare bedroom.

"What do you want to do with the 5.56s?"

"We'll keep 'em. You know Ron and Clarence, they like the BB guns. We probably ought to move a few cases of the 5.56 ammo in here together with a couple of cases of grenades."

"You act like you think they're coming back."

"Derek made it to Iowa and back and he's not half a mean as either Ron or Clarence. When they first left, I felt like I'd never see them again. That was before I knew about Obama and his Executive Order. If nothing else, they'll be back to get explosives so they can hunt him down."

"Say, I got caught up on reading your stories, your really don't like President's, do you?"

"You left out Geraldo. I don't like politicians, lawyers and reporters, in no particular order. I never cared for Geraldo, but when he drew the map in the sand, he became a viable target."

"But that was 10 years ago."

"So, do you think he's really changed? There are a few others I dislike more, most of them worked for the Communist News Network or the Communist Broadcast System."

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Ron and Clarence made it as far as Louisiana. They ran into trouble just NW of New Orleans. According to Clarence, the only thing they could figure was that someone mistook them for FEMA. FEMA had been delayed getting to New Orleans back in 2005 because the Governor wouldn't let the President federalize the Louisiana National Guard. Then when Dubya got his chest in the wringer, he fired Brownie. I seriously doubt they'll ever get New Orleans rebuilt now.

"New ventilations scheme?"

"I'm just lucky they didn't get the radiator, Gar-Bear."

"Why didn't you get out your elephant rifles and return fire? Whaz the matter you short on .338 Winchester magnum and .375 H&H magnum?"

"I thought about it until I heard the Rebel yell. Clarence said, 'Oh, oh', and I went pedal to the metal."

"You guys missed out on the fun."

"What fun?"

"We were attacked by several hundred men. We used the artillery and Derek's tank with canister. We had 4 dead and 37 wounded, they took 100% fatalities. Anyway, I collected any weapons worth having, cleaned them and stored them in your spare bedroom partner. There are also some of the newer version of the LAW rocket and a few AT-4s. We added some 5.56 and a few grenades."

"How'd you make out on the crop? Do you know what caused the failure?"

"Something called the Poalic Grain Blight. If you want to know more, ask Derek."

"Well crap, we can't go back to California and we can't take our sightseeing trip. What now?"

"Other than they cleaned up your trailers and changed the linens they're the same as you left them, stay here."

"Gary, what we gonna do if'n we stays here?"

"Fight Obama."

"He'll never get the Army to help him attack American citizens!"

"I suppose that means we'll be fighting the Blue hats."

"That's different, where do I sign up?"

"Count me in Gary."

"Say, you didn't say why we're fighting."

"He issued an order claiming all of the food for the government."

"He can't do that."

"Sure he can, he did it. The only question is, *Can he get away with it?* I don't believe we've attracted any attention, so far. Cross your fingers and hope it stays that way. *The day may dawn when fair play, love for one's fellow men, respect for justice and freedom, will enable tormented generations to march forth triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair.*"

"Who said that?"

"Winston Churchill."

"Can we repulse them if they attack?"

"Ron, we have 2 Paladins and 1 tank. We have one Huey for Dust Off. They have an Air Force, Army, Navy and maybe Marines. What do you think?"

"We're screwed."

"However..."

"What?"

"We have Stinger's that have their IFFs disabled. That could help with the Air Force. We have hundreds of square miles of desert that we know and they don't. That could help with the Army. We have 300 combat experienced American soldiers, which are worth a Division of UN troops. If they use an aircraft to take recon photos, there is nothing visible from the air to give them a clue as to our military power. We'll just fight a 4th Generation War; most disciplined military units can't cope with that."

"Bullcrap. What's the bottom line?"

"Oh, that. We'll probably get killed, but they'll wish they never invaded Arizona."

"Well, let's get a look at those weapons."

o

Clarence later asked me what a 4th Generation war was. I told him like the war in 'Nam and the war in Iraq, an insurgency.

If the US ever has another internal war, like the *Civil War* or the *War of Northern Aggression*, it will no doubt be a 4th generation war. *Pax Americana* is a great example of that statement. So is *Battle of Jakes*. Given the absolute power of our modern military, it would be nearly impossible to go head-to-head with them. It is nearly inconceivable that any President could manage to get the American military to wage war on the American people. However, there is nothing to preclude a President from calling on the UN to help restore law and order.

Until George Bush became President, I couldn't conceive of any President turning on the American people. That's not to condemn Bush, but to identify when the concept became plausible. Can you imagine Obama and Obama in the White House? I have concluded anything is possible. In this final work, I have examined a series of disasters that could happen. Not one of them is impossible although having them all occur in such a short sequence is highly unlikely. Never say Never! Bob Dylan was never more right than when he sang, *The Times They Are a-Changin'*.

*Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters*

*Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.*

*Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'.
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'.*

*Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'.*

*Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is
Rapidly agin'.
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.*

The line it is drawn

*The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'.
© Bob Dylan 1964, renewed 1991*

His most famous song:

*How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.*

*How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.*

*How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.
© Bob Dylan 1962, renewed 1990*

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"It's come to that, huh?"

"Fraid so partner. How many times have you and I talked about this? Dozens at least. There are still plenty of us left who were born in the '40s and '50s who remember when this was mostly a free county. I defined my allegiance in the early '60s and never looked back. I don't know what the future holds, nobody does; for my part, I'll give every drop of blood I have to keep the country the way it used to be."

"Talkin' about it won't cut it anymore."

"You do realize that we're not going to get much notice when it does go down? About the best we can do is get ready to bolt and start our own little war."

"Do you have enough vehicles to move all of your stuff?"

"Never keep all your eggs in one basket, Ron. We have stuff cached all over the desert. What little there is left here is transportable."

"When did you do that?"

"I didn't, it was one of Derek's brainstorms after he got back from that trip. He knew we had enough heirloom seeds to outlast the Blight and could, with care, continue to produce food. That will make us a primary target, as soon as the government figures it out."

"And, when they determine that there are people in the area, they'll conclude that there must be food."

"Exactly."

"Gary, consider how cold it is out, there's no way to hide the people, chimney smoke will give them away."

"You're right about that Clarence, as many people are heating with wood as are with other fuels. What would you guess a spring offensive?"

"They have to gather the information, analyze it and make plans, Gar-Bear. I'd say late spring or early summer."

The problem with people who have low self-esteem is they don't handle criticism well. My mama always said, *If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.* I guess she didn't know about chocolates, like Forrest's mama did.

Whetstone – Chapter 29

"Have you found Jesus yet, Gump?"

"I didn't know I was supposed to be looking for him, sir."

We continued preparing through the winter of early '14. We never saw a contrail, but that didn't mean much, some planes don't generate one. Besides, maybe the government still had a satellite they could use or some of those Predators. Derek had to pull double duty; he knew about the Blight and was our military commander. I unloaded all of my magazines to let the springs rest and later reloaded them to capacity. By now, I had dozens of 20-round M1A mags, more than I could carry. I loaded them into surplus gas mask bags because they had a shoulder strap. In a pinch, I could get so loaded down I couldn't walk.

There were advantages to winning the Lottery, if you felt like having 20 of those 5-round magazines for your Tac-50, the fact that they listed for \$330 each didn't bother you. Neither did paying some Sergeant First Class an inordinate amount of money for a few rounds of Raufoss. Of course for a while there, I did have to worry about the BATFE. Once I even got together with a class III dealer and loaded up on those fancy suppressors Surefire makes. They cost about 3 times as much as your average suppressor but last about 5 times as long.

I have a car load of Thunder Lizards but not a single Chicago Typewriter. The Tommy Gun weights about 10 pounds empty. A full 100 round drum goes another 10 pounds, easy. There were two military types of Thompson SMG. One, the M1928A1, had a 20 round box magazine or 50-100 round drum. It had a longer barrel than the M1A1. Its cocking mechanism was also on the top of the gun. The M1A1 had a shorter barrel, 30 round box magazine, and the cocking mechanism was on the side. The M1928A1 along with the regular M1928 was the choice of the Marines. The M1A1 was the choice of the Army. An original Model of 1928 in working condition can easily fetch \$20,000 or more.

The M1A1, formally adopted as the United States Submachine Gun, Caliber .45, M1A1, could be produced in half the time of the M1928A1, and at a much lower cost. In 1939, Thompson's cost the government \$209 apiece. By Spring of 1942, cost reduction design changes had brought this down to US\$70. In February of 1944, the M1A1 reached a low price of \$45 each, including accessories and spare parts. The thing I can't understand is why, with all the money I have, I can't find a Thompson and a few of the 100-round drums. They're out there, they were a popular bring back item after WW II.

Heck I even loaded up on Speer Lawman and Gold Dot 230gr ammo in case I ever found one (I'm not holding my breath). The Tommy Gun wasn't worth a crap in dense jungle because of its low muzzle velocity. Hey there's no jungle in southern Arizona, bring one on. Yeah, I know I'm not Ben Raines, but we like the same guns.

o

Ron and Clarence settled in easily enough but usually ate dinner with us. A frequent topic of conversation was the government and when they'd come after us. There wasn't any way we could hide so we didn't try. If they got a Predator drone up with FLIR and DLIR they'd almost know our exact population. DLIR (downward looking infra-red) was developed and used in the F-117. A couple other planes had it too, the F-111F and the A-6E. After a while, the nose of the plane gets in the way, making it impossible for the pilot to keep an eye on the target. In the F-117, the IR automatically switches from FLIR to DLIR.

"I sure wish I had a Thompson."

"Wish in one hand and crap in the other, Gar-Bear."

"Ronald, there have to be some out there for the taking. The problem is finding one. If we did find one, it would probably be a display item and have the firing pin removed, or something."

"I thought the firing pin was machined into the bolt face, Gary."

"Clarence the military version, the M1A1 had that feature. It wouldn't use the drum magazines; I don't want one of those."

"You'd burn through a lot ammo with one of those, Gar."

"Ronald, I have 10,000 rounds of .45ACP I've been saving in case I ever found a Chicago Typewriter."

o

Today, the Auto Ordnance Corporation of West Hurley, NY is a company that has expanded its product line to include Submachine guns, Tommy gun patterned semi-auto rifles, M1911A1 pistols, and a host of spare parts and accessories.

For Export and Law Enforcement sales only, A.O. produces the M1927A-5 semi-auto pistol, and the M1928 and M1 Thompson submachine guns. They also have high capacity box magazines from 15 to 30 rounds, and drum magazines in 50 and 100 round capacities.

For domestic sales, they have three versions of a Tommy Gun styled semi-auto rifle; the 1927A-1, 1927A-1C, and M1 semi-auto. They also have a limited number of pre-ban high capacity box magazines and a 10 round drum (yes drum) magazine that simulates the look of the original Tommy Gun.

In keeping with John Thompson's association with the development of the .45 cal. pistol cartridge, Auto Ordnance Corp. produces a line of M1911A1 pistols that are available in

several models with a variety of configurations, calibers and finishes that are all made in the United States. Magazines are available in capacities up to the legal 10 round limit.

Owners of Thompson submachine guns, new or old, can find a wide assortment of parts and accessories in the Auto Ordnance catalog. GI slings, belts and magazine pouches can be found among other items such as a violin carrying case and engraved cigarette lighters and coffee cups.

◦

"How far is it to West Hurley, NY?"

"Why?"

"I just learned that Auto Ordnance is making Thompson submachine guns again."

"Let me check. Let's see, in round numbers, 2,500 miles."

"Saddle up, we're going to NY."

"No we're not, Dad. You can't get there from here."

"That's an old CB joke, you can get from anywhere to anywhere."

"Maybe before WW III, you could, but not anymore."

"I want that submachine gun!"

"Which one?"

"The M1928A1."

"Who used them?"

"You mean in the military? The USMC."

"How many do you want?"

"Three. If I get one and Ron and Clarence don't, I'll never hear the end of it."

"What do you want for magazines?"

"Five of the 100-round drums, each."

"It may take some doing, you know."

"Like I care – it's not right I have a Thunder Lizard and don't have a Chicago Typewriter."

"Are you going to need ammo?"

"I don't but Ron and Clarence will."

o

"Sorry, but they're used."

"Be still my heart! You did it! How? Where? When?"

I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.

"*Top Gun*, Tom Cruise speaking to Kelly McGillis. How many did you find?"

"Ten. We also got several cases of 230gr FMJ to go with the guns. Plus, there are a few of the 20 and 30-round sticks; you can use them for back up."

"Don't need them, got my M1A for backup."

"This I gotta see."

"What?"

"You with your tactical vest, an M1A, 8 magazines for the rifle, 6 grenades, a LAW rocket, a Thompson submachine gun and 5 100-round drums. Hell, Dad, you won't even be able to walk."

"Nothin' new about that, I can barely walk when I'm not carrying a gun. That's why I have my tactical wheelchair. That has a 9 rifle gun rack plus a trailer to haul the ammo."

"With a top speed of 9mph, the battle will be over before you get there."

"Max, sic 'im."

o

"Where did he find these?"

"Damned if I know, he wouldn't tell me. Wait, that's not true, he said, *I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.* It's a line out of a movie."

"Yeah, *Top Gun*, Gar-Bear."

"You have it in your collection?"

"Yeah, but I didn't wear out a copy like you did."

"What do you think Clarence, feel like doing your Ben Raines thing?"

"Who?"

"Ben Raines, oh, never mind. He was a character in a series of books."

"How much these magazines weigh loaded?"

"Ten pounds."

"Each?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Don't know as I can carry 50 pounds and still fight."

"Plus the Thompson, an M1A, 8 magazines, 6 grenades and a LAW rocket."

"That will weigh more than I do. How are you going to do it?"

"Load down my wheelchair!"

"I'll take one."

"One what, Ron?"

"One wheelchair. I can't carry that much stuff either."

"Gawd, I hate getting old. Ok, two more tactical wheelchairs. Anything else?"

"Whatcha got?"

o

"What about the snakes and lizards? What we gotta watch out for?"

"There's scorpions, gila monsters, rattlesnakes, coral snakes, bats and black widow spiders; nothing much different than what we had in Palmdale. We lived in Palmdale for 20 years and I can't recall ever seeing a snake that wasn't in a zoo."

"How about when you were at Edwards?"

"I saw 2, one was a sidewinder and I don't know what the other was, maybe a Mojave. We made that second snake a good snake and gave the sidewinder to the survival school."

"Seen any around here?"

"Haven't been looking. I'd be a lot more worried about the government's JBTs than anything else."

"It's been nearly 4 years since the war and we ain't seen nuttin' of the government. It was pretty much the same in Palmdale. Derek told you they were coming to get OUR food?"

"Can you picture Obama hoeing a garden?"

"I'm still trying to figure out how he got elected."

"That's simple: 1) people were tired of the Bush Republicans; 2) a few people liked Bill; and 3) a black man who happened to be Muslim was too inviting to a politically correct America."

"How is he still in office? We haven't had a Presidential election since '08."

"Got me, Ronald. Let me ask you a question: where are they getting the money to run whatever government there is? There hasn't been any way to file a tax return since the war. I rather doubt that his highness is eating MREs."

"How much gold was there in New York City and at Fort Knox?"

"I don't know. I think I read somewhere that there was about 4,600 tons of gold at Fort Knox. At bank in New York had more, maybe 5,000 tons. Altogether, that would be almost 10,000 tons of gold and that's 240 million ounces at \$1,500 an ounce. I don't believe he has to eat beans. That's nearly \$360 billion at today's prices."

"But the money in New York doesn't belong to us."

"It probably does now. Maybe that's why Derek seemed to think we see blue hats in the US."

"Where are they going to find anyone willing to come here?"

"I don't know, maybe Africa."

"That will go over good, especially in the south."

"Gary, we've been invaded from the south and now you're talking about being invaded from the east. Does we have enough people left to fight them?"

"Unless we're invaded from the north by Canada and the west by Indonesia, we might. I think those Russians must be deep in snow and the Chinese are mostly crispy critters. That would leave the island nations and Africa as the major world powers."

"Them Canadians can't be much better off. What are you smirking about?"

"I just had a thought. What do you call the 2007 snowstorm they had in Tucson?"

"I don't know, and oddity?"

"Practice."

"Speaking of which, we need to get to the range."

"Why?"

"To try out our Thompson's."

"Load up a couple of drums with that military ball ammo Derek brought back and we'll see if we can hit anything at 50 yards."

"Why 50 yards?"

"That's the effective range of a Tommy gun."

"You got it backwards, Gar-Bear. The M1As should be our primary guns and the sub-machine guns the backups. Given a choice, I'd rather shoot them at 300 yards than 50 yards."

"What about our shotguns, Ron? If I'm gonna be fighting, I need to know which gun to shoot when."

"Clarence, the order is rifle, shotgun or submachine gun followed by your handgun. If we're down to depending on handguns, were in some deep doo-doo."

The people who lived in Palmdale were luckier than residents of other cities; they had a huge wind turbine generating nearly 1mw of power for the Water District. Palmdale had water while many cities lacked the power to pump their water. The Aqueduct came through the area, but without the electricity, the water couldn't be pumped over the Tehachapi Mountains. I suppose we should have felt bad over reallocating those wind turbines from Tehachapi, but we didn't. Derek didn't say that anyone was there that objected to his group taking them.

I probably already said this, but I figured we could generate power for at least 40 years. It could be longer provided we could refurbish the turbines. Unless something untoward happened, the turbines would out live me. Obama had probably outlawed guns by now, either by persuading Congress or by Executive Order. I didn't feel a bit bad having those Tommy guns, hell a BB gun was probably illegal.

We'd been attacked by a hungry family, Latino troops and a big group of bad guys, managing each time to successfully resist their overtures. We hadn't had to go up against a modern, mechanized military, possibly one with aircraft. A jet flew so fast you couldn't line up a gun on them; you either used a missile or got bombed. There might be a lucky shot, it happened a few times in 'Nam, where a person brought down a jet with a rifle. However, it wasn't anything a person could count on.

One thing of great concern was the dearth of supplies. Things like tires, batteries, belts and hoses for vehicles were getting hard to come by. We had spares, but no way to replace them when we had to use them. Regardless of your feelings on salvaging supplies, eventually the cupboards were bare. You either had to grow it or make it yourself. It was one of the reasons we standardized most of our firearms to certain calibers, it lessened the type of supplies. Even reloading ammo had a limit, eventually the brass would be beyond use, provided we still had powder, primer and bullets.

Per Derek's instructions all the grass crops were gathered up, taken a few miles out and buried. The winter was very hard considering we were in southern Arizona, it would have seemed like nothing to the Iowa folks. It got down to 0°F for several nights running, hopefully low enough to destroy any leftover seeds we'd missed. The starts from the greenhouse gave us a leg up on planting. We didn't lose any livestock other than those we butchered. There's something to be said for having stored feed and fresh alfalfa.

Can't tell you how nice it was to have Ron and Clarence back, even if it meant I got called asshole a dozen times a day. I put Damon on finding them a means of transportation, thinking he'd come up with a couple of wheelchairs. What he found instead was an ATV dealer that hadn't been looted. Or, hadn't until he got there. When he found them, he didn't say anything, opting to have one of Mary's relations work 'em over just a bit.

Using my 9 rifle rack on my wheelchair as a pattern, he welded together a 6 rifle rack for each of the ATVs. Then, he mounted one of those window rifle racks on the backside of each one to hold 3 LAWS rockets. Saddlebags held grenades and a mounted box loaded magazines. When they had the project done, Damon came with a hat containing 3 slips of paper and said the 3 of us should each draw a slip. My paper said black, Ron's red and Clarence's green. Apparently, he could only get one of each color. Near as I can tell, an ATV is a 4 wheeled motorcycle. They'd done something to the exhaust system to make them reasonably quiet, we could get within walking distance of any bad guys.

To be totally candid, I sort felt like that bunch in the movie, *The Apple Dumpling Gang*. Can you picture three old (recovering) alcoholics, all in their early 70s, armed to the teeth with really deadly weapons out patrolling the fence line of a small 80-acre ranch in southern Arizona? Noise discipline was something they talked about on the military channel; you could hear us coming at least ¼ mile away. It was mostly a mix of name calling, curse words and suggesting what we'd try to do if the bad guys showed up. Yeah, like Osama Obama would really show up in person! Maybe the nicest suggestion was to cut his heart out and feed it to Max, sounds like animal cruelty to me.

It wasn't as if we were in any real danger, Derek and Bill had patrols out 24/7; every road into the area was heavily barricaded and each barricade manned. Most of the people in Whetstone and Benson were concentrating on trying to grow enough food this year to get through the coming year and maybe resupply their dwindling pantries. There was even that lady who grew goats; what was her name, nanny goat lady? Turned out she used to go to Frugal's forum too! We had our fingers crossed we'd seen the last of the grass blight.

o

"Whetstone base, west 10. We have a party here who wants to talk to whoever's in charge."

"Rog, any idea who they are?"

"Foreigners dressed in military uniforms and wearing blue hats."

"UN?"

"Affirmative."

"How many are there?"

"One jeep and several BMDs. Maybe 50 troops."

"Rog. Give us 10 and then escort their OIC, his driver and their NCOIC down to the ranch. What rank is that officer?"

"He says he's a Captain."

"Rog. The Lt. Col. will see him when he gets here."

"Derek, get off those butter bars and pin these on."

"Lt. Col.? That's a quick promotion."

"Their guy is a Captain; you need to outrank him a little. By the way, each Platoon just became a Company."

"Dad, this is your place, shouldn't you be the one talking to him?"

"You can bring me in later as the local civilian in charge."

"Hey Ron, Clarence and you should put up the military weapons and grab those Marlin rifles. It might help if this guy thinks we're just a bunch of hayseeds."

o

"I'm Captain Farid Hassan with the UN Peacekeeping Force. I came to talk to whoever is in charge here."

"I'm Lt. Col. Derek Ott, in charge of security. You're a long way from home, Captain."

"Your President and the Vice President asked for UN assistance in gathering and redistributing food."

"We haven't had an election since the war, who is the President?"

"Barack Obama and the Secretary of Defense is Bill Clinton."

"We hadn't heard, the radio and TV haven't been on since the war. I have a small military detachment providing security for the area."

"Large?"

"Small, 6 Companies, about one Brigade."

"Brigade? Do you have infantry, armor and artillery?"

"Yes. My father is the man in charge here, I'll introduce you. Come with me, please, Captain."

"Dad, this is Captain Farid Hassan with the UN Peacekeeping Force. I'll be around if you need me."

"Captain. The fellow on my left is Ron Brown and the fellow on my right is Clarence Floyd, my advisors. What can we do for you today?"

"Your President, Barack Obama, asked for UN assistance in gathering and redistributing food."

Whetstone – Chapter 30

"I urge restraint, here," Ron murmured.

"We had a crop failure last year Captain; there isn't much food to distribute. It was some kind of blight that destroyed all of our grass crops."

"Yes, the Blight, most unfortunate. Be that as it may, we're here to collect the available food so it can be redistributed. I see you men are wearing guns. That is prohibited. In fact, we're going to have to seize all weapons including the equipment your Brigade has."

"Our Constitution guarantees us the right to keep and bear arms. It also provides that no property shall be seized without due process of law. I think maybe you're in the wrong Country Captain."

"Your President suspended your Constitution pending the recovery from the war."

"You don't say. By what authority?"

"Executive Order."

"An Executive Order issued by a President whose term of office ended on January 20, 2012? I don't think so. Are you a student of history Captain?"

"I don't understand."

"Julius Caesar, upon crossing the Rubicon River at the beginning of the Roman Civil War said, *lacta alea est*, the die is cast. You go, Captain, and tell those in charge that we don't have any food or weapons to spare. Tell them that we will resist any and all attempts by you, or anyone, to take what we have. You tell them that Caesar also said, *veni, vidi, vici*, I came, I saw, I conquered. Finally, tell them that George Santayana said, *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*. You're dismissed, Captain."

o

"He looked a little po'd."

"I got at least part of it right."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, the die is cast, there is no turning back from here."

"What about those Latin quotes?"

"I took Latin in 9th grade. It's about all I remember."

"Where do we go from here?"

"Probably to Hell in a handcart. If we get some of that material that they make Space Blankets from we can suspend it over the buildings and reflect any infrared signature they might have. That should make them harder targets to find. We have plenty of the camouflage netting and can suspend that above the blanket. They can't hit what they can't see."

Those silver oak leaves looked pretty good on Derek's lapel, he might as well keep wearing them, for all practical purposes they didn't mean any more than the butter bar. I got on the ham set that evening and spread the word about Obama and what he was doing. Strangely, I got quite a few acknowledgements and an indication we weren't alone in the fight. One fella said that the only thing worse than them damned Yankees was them damned furiners. His handle was Johnny Reb.

In the US, space blankets are made by vacuum depositing a very precise amount of pure aluminum vapor onto a very thin, durable film substrate. Space blankets are included in many emergency, first aid, and survival kits because they are usually waterproof and windproof. It can sometimes be found in large rolls, like plastic. The emergency space blanket is just that, a sheet of plastic. The more durable kinds have cloth on one side.

We explained to Derek what we had in mind to protect the buildings on the acreage. He said it sounded like a lot of work but was worth a try. The 3 of us resumed our patrols but cut the chatter. If the UN thought it was up against a brigade sized force, their first step would probably be a recon. If they sent in spies, through the desert, they were as likely as not to start at our place.

We'd screwed the pooch not putting up the netting and space blankets earlier; they already had pictures of the entire area. Didn't think of it at the time, I was too concerned with getting a Tommy gun. It was a problem of getting overly focused on a single issue. The 3 of us weren't in charge of security and just ran the fence line to free up a couple of the troops. What I know about fighting a battle could be written in large letters on a sheet of paper that would get lost in the eye of a gnat. It all boiled down to take cover and shoot back.

It never occurred to anyone that they might wait until later in the year to attack. The gardens were growing very well and the grass crops looked like they might be ok. In times past, disasters were speculative, one could expect them, but they might never happen. Conversely, they could happen without any expectation. This was different; they knew where we were and had as much as said, *we'll be back*. When that didn't happen right away, we resumed the fence line patrol. May ended and June came and went. None of the 3 of us saw a soul. During the second week of July 2014, we were about halfway

around when Max stopped, perked his ears up and growled. We pulled up short and watched, but we didn't see anything. Clarence got his shotgun, Ron his Thompson and I grabbed my M1A. We eased our way over to the fence and opened the gate.

"Max, kill."

If you could get your dragster to accelerate that fast, you'd always win the drags. Two guys got up and ran when they saw Max coming. They were close, before I could bring my rifle to bear, Ron cut them down.

"Hey this one's alive. Crap, I just winged him."

I dug out a bandage and slapped it on the wound. Derek could talk to the guy and see what was going on.

"Whetstone base, Gary."

"Whetstone base, copy."

"We're at the south fence and just shot a couple of spies, send a truck."

"Rog."

"As soon as they pick him up, we'd better finish the patrol. What did they have for guns?"

"G3s."

"Right caliber anyway. What kind of condition are they in?"

"Gary, these look fairly new, you want them?"

"Sure. Let's check and see if they have a camp nearby."

"Over here."

"What is there?"

"Not much, a radio, some food and a couple of sleeping pads."

"Grab the radio, it might come in handy."

Ron grabbed the radio and Clarence picked up the food and pads. It looked like they'd been there a day or two, why hadn't we noticed them? This was the first time in a week that Max was with us; remind me to give him a steak. Were there more of them somewhere around the small acreage? I got my Thompson and loaded a full drum, noticing

that Clarence was swapping out a Thompson for his shotgun. The truck came, picked up the survivor and the body and returned to the house. We finished the patrol without Max spooking again.

"Did he say anything?"

"Not much, he's a Paki. He was hurt worse than we thought, he passed out and we had to turn him over to the doc."

"That Captain who was here – was he a Paki, too?"

"Yeah. I'd have thought that India and Pakistan would have nuked each other. Now I think not, but we didn't get a chance to confirm that. If he doesn't speak English, we may have a problem, none of my people speak their lingo."

"Let me get on my computer and check something. Hang on, I almost got it. Ah, according to the copy of the CIA Factbook I have on my computer, they speak the following languages: Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Siraiqi (a Punjabi variant) 10%, Pashtu 8%, Urdu (official) 8%, Balochi 3%, Hindko 2%, Brahui 1%, English (official and lingua franca of Pakistani elite and most government ministries), Burushaski, and other 8%."

"They almost speak as many languages as we do. Unless this guy speaks English, French or German, I won't have a clue. I picked up a little French and German in Kosovo."

"Figure anything out from his papers or the radio?"

"A call came in on the radio but it wasn't English. I can't make anything out of their papers. They've been making a map of the location, though – they've been here a while."

"It looked like 2 days from their camp. Did they have anything important marked on their map?"

"The locations of the buildings were all. It doesn't appear as if they'd gotten close."

"Did they have the building locations marked before or after they got here?"

"No way to tell, why?"

"I had an idle thought was all. What if they already had the building locations? They could have gotten those using a Predator."

"If they use GBUs, and already had the building locations, we're screwed."

"The same applies if they didn't have the locations before and radioed them in."

"Have we got enough Stingers?"

"We have a total of 24."

"Can you get more?"

"Not at the moment, no."

"If the Commander in Chief gave an order to the military to enforce his Executive Orders, would they obey?"

"Some might, but the majority wouldn't because their oath is to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

"Can you get in touch with any military units?"

"I can," Randy butted in. "They moved a detachment of Marines to Yuma. You know Marines, no way they're going to stand around and let a bunch of outsiders take over the county."

"Derek, give those butter bars to Randy and the two of you contact Yuma. See if we can get some help. If we can't, at least try and get more of those Stingers."

"I ain't no damned officer," Randy protested.

"You are now, L-T," Derek laughed.

o

The plain truth of it was that I wasn't in charge of anything. Sharon and the girls were in charge of the house and garden, Derek was in charge of security and Damon in charge of recovery. Next to me, Damon had the fewest duties, there wasn't much left to salvage. I-10 wasn't nearly as busy as I-40 in northern Arizona and he'd gone almost to the state line in both directions. Most of his efforts were now centered on Tucson; there was always something there to find.

I took my lack of duties seriously; the 3 of us patrolled the fence line on the even hours, then sat and smoked and drank coffee the remainder of the time. From the time of the shooting, we didn't have any more trouble and Max seemed almost disappointed. The wounded guy got an infection and what antibiotics we had failed to save him. Near as we could tell, he didn't speak English and we'd have never understood him.

It was a good thing we got a corn crop, we needed alcohol to make biodiesel and E-85. What little corn we did get went into livestock feed, I had to let loose of some of those one ounce gold pieces to get corn for alcohol. We also bought rice and other cereal crops we didn't or couldn't grow. It did appear that we were past the Blight.

Of course about the time the harvest came in and the UN came back. The planes that dared to fly over soon learned we had Stinger missiles, lots of Stinger missiles. In case you're wondering, the boys came up with a TRUCKLOAD of the things. They wouldn't say where they found them, but they did say there were no Marines at Yuma or Barstow. Lo and behold, they also found 4 more Paladins and 3 M1A2SEP Abrams. More importantly, they found a few stragglers, of military origin – our military. If they told me where, I've forgotten by now.

Anyway, as I sat sipping coffee from my NRA cup – it said: The 2nd Amendment, America's Original Homeland Security – we mused about the coming battle.

"They haven't sent over an airplane in nearly a week, think they know better, Gary?"

"Those were small flights, 2 or 4 planes. If they send a lot at once, we could be in deep. What I want to see is a Raptor up there shooting down the MiGs."

"I'd settle for an old fashion F-15, Gary."

"Or, even one of those Super Hornets."

"I read the results of some tests they did putting a Raptor against all of them. The ending score was Raptor 60, F-15s, F-16s and F/A-18s 0. Maybe I'm biased, but that some kind of super airplane."

"Well, they should be at a quarter billion apiece."

"They wouldn't have cost so much if they'd have bought the original order. They had to spread the tens of billions in development costs over fewer planes. They're complicated to build; I think they were only building something like 20 a year once they got rolling. I read somewhere that they're more complex than the human body."

Mussing about the capacity we used to have. Where did we hide the B-2s and F-22s, inquiring minds want to know? Which brings to mind the old saw, *it's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog*. We'd bluffed, claiming a Brigade when we had maybe 2 Companies. The few additional men they added gave us maybe 3 Companies of soldiers. With 6 artillery pieces and now 4 tanks, we couldn't last very long against a sizeable, organized force. The main difference was we were fighting for our homes and they were half a world away from theirs.

o

"Whetstone base, condition black. It looks like we have the whole UN at our front and back doors."

"Been nice knowin ya fellas, time to get to the embankment."

Derek ordered 2 tanks to the east and two to the west. The arty opened up and conversation was next to impossible. If these guys attacking us had watched the History Channel, they'd have known how to get past our little Siegfried Line. Their problem was they stuck to I-10, a very bad plan. With our registered arty and a pair of tanks at each barricade, they weren't getting anywhere.

The sneaky SOBs had a third force to the south, some on 80 and the larger force on 90. Next, they brought in the aircraft, Russian Hinds. We replied with Stinger fire, getting a good share of them. Mind you, Ron, Clarence and I were on the embankment, just waiting. While we watched the action, we were busy topping off mags and loading the extras. We had dragged all of our guns up to the fighting positions and had 5 LAW rockets apiece. The acreage isn't on 80, it's on the side road. I was on my second canteen of water before anyone showed up.

I opened up with my Tac-50 while they were still 1,500 meters out. They were driving commandeered vehicles which didn't give them much protection. I tried to block the road by blowing up the engine in the front vehicle. That worked, for all of 10 seconds, then they tried to go around and I murdered a second vehicle. Meanwhile Ron and Clarence were shooting at the guys bailing out of the vehicles.

All of our soldier's, you see, were sent to the barricades except for those using the arty and the Stingers. It looked like a Platoon sized group and there were only about 10 of us on the embankment. They were in the open, we were in fighting positions, advantage: ours. We got reinforcements, the ladies joined in. I was being careful not to damage their guns; I could easy get \$4-\$500 apiece for them.

Ping, a round hit right in front of my foxhole, spraying sand and dirt everywhere. I thought I spied that SOB who shot at me and introduced him to Mr. McMillan; it cut him near in half. They were, nonetheless, getting closer so I switched to my open sighted M1A. That rifle must have been 1 in 1,000, no old guy like me should be able to shoot that good. I swear these guys had the range; they were chewing up the ground around all of our fighting positions.

I was slammed to the back of the foxhole, that Dragon Skin had just earned its pay. Knocked the wind out of me, I struggled to get my breath and stand back up. When finally, I managed, I realized it was time for the Tommy guns. I could hear Ron and Clarence shooting theirs, so I racked back the action and opened up. Even with their moderate rate of fire, these things give a new meaning to the term *spray and pray*. I looked over and Udell, Jr. had his M16 set on full auto and was spraying, if not praying.

I think it was Sharon or Mary that got the last one, with a shotgun. "I hollered, *Reload, there could be more coming*, then ripped open a battle pack and started to refill my M1A magazines. I must have been pumped; I reloaded every magazine I had before I noticed it was very quiet. I stood and looked around; everyone was out of his/her fighting position, just standing around visiting.

Even the artillery was quiet; the soldiers were restocking their ammo. I shouldered my M1A and went to check on Ron and Clarence. There was a row of slugs across the front of Ron's Dragon Skin, but he didn't seem to be hurt. Clarence must have avoided getting shot; he had a big grin on his face.

"They got you too, partner?"

"Knocked me on my butt, took a minute to get my wind. We get 'em all?"

"This bunch at least, Gary. What was that that you hollered?"

"I said reload, there could be more coming."

"You should have had your radio on; we stopped them at the barricades."

"Is everyone ok? Nobody dead or wounded?"

"Not this time at least, no."

"What happened at the barricades?"

"Oh, between the artillery and the tanks, we stopped them cold in their tracks. We had just 45-50 dead and about 100, round numbers, wounded. Derek and Bill have their people out collecting weapons, ammo and supplies. Derek said they were just going to leave the UN vehicles on the road to extend the barricades."

"Grandpa, I have a report from the radio, want to hear it?" Britney asked.

"Waddy learn?"

"There were attacks all over the country, in most places, we won. Someone compared the battle to the battle of Moga... Moga..., I didn't get the name."

"Mogadishu?"

"That's the name."

"Let's hope that this battle had the same effect on the UN that that battle had on us."

"What do you mean, grandpa?"

"Remember the movie, *Blackhawk Down*? Clinton pulled our troops from Somalia after the Battle of Mogadishu. In a national security policy review session held in the White House on October 6, 1993, Clinton directed the acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Jeremiah, to stop all actions by US forces against Aidid except those re-

quired in self-defense. He also reappointed Ambassador Robert B. Oakley as special envoy to Somalia in an attempt to broker a peace settlement and then announced that all US Forces would withdraw from Somalia no later than March 31, 1994. On December 15, 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin stepped down, taking much of the blame for what was deemed a failed policy. A few hundred Marines remained offshore to assist with any noncombatant evacuation mission that might occur regarding the 1,000-plus US civilians and military advisers remaining as part of the US liaison mission. All US personnel were finally withdrawn by March 1995."

"They won't pull out after one defeat."

"What makes you think the next battle will go any different? They're doing what they're told; we're fighting for our homes. Get someone down there and collect their weapons, you can never have too many guns."

"You really believe that, Gary?"

"They're not the top of my list, that's toilet paper. After that come food and meds. Then a source of power and fuel, if required. Guns don't do you any good unless you have ammo, look at Ron, Clarence, 30 guns and only 1,000 rounds of ammo."

"Well, I didn't win the Lottery and ammo is damned expensive."

"Ron, I told you to get a case of SS109 when it was still cheap. Military ammo in sealed cans lasts for years."

"But you don't like the 5.56."

"True, but you do. It really doesn't matter what you choose as a Main Battle Rifle, as long as it's a 7.62 NATO. I like the M1A, the next guy might like the FN FAL or one of the G3s. My fellow author Jerry likes the PTR91 and Steyr AUG."

"What's the 5.56?"

"That's more of an assault rifle than a main battle rifle. It lays down a high volume of fire when you need it. The accuracy is limited to about 4-500 yards. Different situations call for different weapons. A handgun is basically a last ditch weapon, you should never let anyone get within handgun range."

"What's handgun range Gary?"

"Seven yards, Clarence."

"Somebody asking about 5.56?"

"Yeah, Derek. Why? We're running low, aren't we?"

"Not really. See that conex over there?"

"What is a conex, kid? Speak English."

"The metal shipping container buried under sand bags, over by my tank."

"Yeah, I see it. Isn't that your office?"

"Yep. I keep my semi-ready ammo there."

"I thought that you said that semi-ready ammo is behind the Tank Commander. What are tank rounds doing stockpiled so close to my house? You trying to blow me up?"

"Not that semi-ready ammo, Dad. What's 3,820 times 192?"

"I don't know, 4000 times 200, about 800,000?"

"Close, 733,440. That's how many rounds of 5.56 I have. I'm selling a case of 3,820 for an ounce of gold."

"Jeez, kid, you take after my dad sometimes. These are friends. Why are you being stingy?"

"It was a joke, Dad, relax."

"What kind of ammo? It isn't that frangible stuff?" asked Ron.

"Good old fashioned NATO military ball, M855. All one lot, too. You interested?"

"Kind of expensive, but then again what isn't?" said Ron.

Derek laughed. "Special offer for an old friend of Dad's. One case on the house. Just remember where you got it from."

"So what happens when we shoot up your stash?"

"Who says that's the only stash I have?"

"Gar-Bear, this kid of yours is an asshole just like you."

o

There was much discussion about whether the UN would come back. They'd paid dearly for the attack, but only they could decide if it was worth the cost to get what little food we were growing. They'd used about a Battalion (1,000-1,200) sized force, this time.

Apparently, our Stinger's had frightened off what Airborne Force they'd used. Those Stingers were consumables and we didn't have another source of supply. Of course they didn't know that and we still had quite a few. When they were gone there wouldn't be much we could do to stop their planes and choppers.

Sometimes military commanders react to a force getting wiped out by re-attacking the same place to put down the resistance. Other times, they move on to greener pastures, first. Still, the rule of thumb is that if you kick they're butts; they'll be back, just like Arnold. Derek continued to send out patrols; it appeared that we were generally hemmed in, by three Regiments. This, in turn, ended Damon's salvage operation, if we didn't have it now, we couldn't get it, unless we could grow it or manufacture it out of available materials.

"How are we on food and supplies, Derek?"

"You tell me, Dad."

"I know how we are on the supplies Sharon and I accumulated, I'm asking about military supplies."

"We have about 1,000 rounds of tank ammo, 3,000 rounds of artillery ammo and charges, enough 50 cal, 5.56 and 9mm to last for several major battles. The only thing we're low on is missiles. We have 56 Stingers left (they got more)."

"I can't shoot down a Hind with the Tac-50, can I?"

"Assuming you could hit it, not likely."

"What model were those Hinds we shot down, they looked like the ones you see in the movies with a single cockpit?"

"Hind A. They didn't go to the tandem cockpit until the D model. The D model is the most common model around the world. The only problem with the Hind is that the engine exhaust is directed right under the rotor shaft. Those heat seekers tend to home in on the jet engine exhaust and blow off the rotor. They later countered that with flares and a missile warning system. One Afghan rebel said in one famous quote *we do not fear the Soviets. We fear their helicopters.*"

"So we gave them Stingers?"

Between battles, I hopped on the SINCGARS radio and put out a net call on 33,000, the single channel plain text frequency for real world emergencies. I didn't expect to hear much, but it was worth a shot.

"Net call, net call, this is Apache 6."

Whetstone – Chapter 31

I waited for all of 10 seconds before I heard, "Apache 6, this is Dustoff 6."

"Apache 6, this is Ugly 2."

"Apache 6, this is Bataan 6."

Well, what do you know. "Dustoff 6, this is Apache 6. Sitrep." If they didn't know that I was only a pretend colonel, then I was happy to pretend.

"Well, Apache 6, we're dug in near the South rim. We are slant 6 flyers and 38 personnel. We are LACE green, red, green, green; we need critical resupply of class 1, 3, 4, and 5, over."

"Roger that. Can resupply you if you locate to our position. Standby for location, break. Ugly 2, Sitrep."

"Apache 6, this is Ugly 2. We are slant 314 grunts. LACE is all green, but we need class 1 and a change of clothes."

"Roger, Ugly 2. Bataan 6, sitrep."

"This is Bataan 6. Current slant is 41 tanks, 41 brads, six mortar tracks..." He went on for at least a minute before he said "over."

"Bataan 6, this is Apache 6. Does the wind still blow cold in Brainerd?"

There was a pause. "Affirmative, Apache 6. How did you know?"

"Because us Iowa boys still think if you ain't Cav, you ain't chit."

"Red Bull?"

"Once upon a time, Bataan 6. All stations, be advised. Blackhorse Whiskey Alpha Kilo Romeo Romeo Bravo Echo Oscar. Acknowledge."

"Dustoff 6, roger."

"Ugly 2, roger."

"Bataan 6, roger. Leave it to the cav."

"Dustoff 6, kickoff is at 2300. Come in on Blackhorse Bravo Kilo Romeo magnetic, November Oscar Echo."

"Wilco, Apache 6."

"Bataan 6, Ugly 2, come in on Blackhorse Echo Echo Lima magnetic from codename Huachuca. Running 1-3, I say again running 1-3, over."

"Bataan 6 wilco. Echo Tango Alpha 2 Delta's, over."

"Ugly 2 wilco. Echo Tango Alpha 6 Delta's or so, over."

"Roger that. Sitreps every hour on the hour. Jump up Blackhorse Bravo Kilo Echo Echo Echo."

"Wilco, Apache 6."

"Wilco, 6."

"Ugly 2, wilco."

"Apache 6 out."

I put down the mike and let out a deep breath. This called for a cigarette.

"Good news, kid?"

"Yep. We got some friendly assistance inbound."

"Oh? What kind?"

"A squadron of medevac choppers, an over strength company of dismounted infantry, and about an armored cav squadron of armor and mechanized infantry."

"How do you know?"

"I gave them directions to our compound. We should see the Blackhawk's tonight, the armor day after tomorrow, and the dismounts by the end of the week."

"The blue hats could have heard that, though, right?"

"Pakistanis normally don't understand the Blackhorse code even if they understand US DoD phonetic spelling."

"And Blackhorse code is?"

"When you want to give out numbers over the radio and you might be monitored, you use the letters from the word Blackhorse to replace numbers. 1 is B, 2 is L, 3 is A, and so forth through 0 is E."

"So what does a series of numbers have to do with it?"

"With a couple of letters in front of them, they become grid coordinates Dad."

"You'd better write that down for me in case I'm at the radio some day and a message comes in. Blackhorse, that's a cav unit isn't it? I thought you were in the Redhorse."

"I was, when I was in Kosovo. Blackhorse is the nickname for the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. They invented the code."

"I understood part of your conversation, what kind of whiskey?"

"No, Dad, dubya not whiskey, think phonetic alphabet."

"Crap, I thought maybe they were bringing me a bottle. Maybe I should try some of the moonshine."

"I won't stop you, if you're sure that's what you want to do. Won't Ron and Clarence complain?"

"That's not how it works, kid. Oh well, they're not bringing any so I guess I'd better forget it."

Right about then a drink would have gone down smooth, it was just a shame I couldn't stop at one. I could, of course, but the next day I'd have to have another and that's a long, winding road (*A Long Day's Journey into Night*). We could sure use the help, Lord knows. How they were going to get an armored cav squadron past the UN was way above my pay grade. Besides, I don't recall him asking me. The choppers could probably sneak in during the dark, I wondered if they were Huey's or Blackhawk's. According to the information I copied to my computer from global security they use Blackhawk's for medevac.

From my viewpoint, the problem with the Blackhawk was its capacity. If one of them went down with a full load of people, that meant a whole lot of dead people. I knew you could shoot one down with an RPG-7; 2 in fact, they did that in Mogadishu. I had felt like telling him to speak English before I realized he was using the phonetic alphabet. I didn't let him know I knew it. The problem was it had changes more than once during my lifetime. I'd learned Able Baker Charlie Dog Easy Fox George How Item Jig King Love Mike Nan Oboe Peter Queen Roger Sugar Tare Uncle Victor William X-ray Yoke Zebra followed by Alfa Bravo Coca Delta Echo Foxtrot Golf Hotel India Juliett Kilo Lima Metro Nectar Oscar Papa Quebec Romeo Sierra Tango Union Victor Whiskey Extra Yankee Zulu and finally Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta Echo Foxtrot Golf Hotel India Kilo Lima Mike November Oscar Papa Quebec Romeo Sierra Tango Uniform Victor Whiskey X-ray Yankee Zulu. About the time I get this one memorized, they'll probably change it again.

o

Someone asked a question about radios, I'll give my answer, but you might want something else. In my opinion, Kenwood gives you the most bang for the buck although Icom and Yaesu are both very good radios. I like the Kenwood TS-2000X. If you add a CB SSB base station and some business radios, you've got everything covered except the frequency hopping military radios. You'll probably have to steal one of those to get one and then you need the code disc to program it to the current operating frequencies. The small portable SINCGARS is the Spearhead. SINCGARS are 28 volt radios except for the man-pack which operates on 12 volts.

If you have an antenna capable of 10 and 12 meters, you don't really need an 11 meter antenna, you can retune your other antenna. I think it's better to have a separate 11 meter antenna plus a Comet tri-bander that will cover the higher frequencies. The X part of the TS-2000 is a plug in card you can always add later – it covers 1.2ghz. Kenwood describes the radio as an HF/VHF/UHF/1.2 GHz All-mode Multi-band Transceiver. Your most important component is your antenna, not the radio. If you have the money, you'll do best with a beam on a high tower. The problem with a beam is that it's not omnidirectional. More watts of output power are nice, but you really should spend the extra bucks on the antenna. If you weren't concerned about money, the Yaesu is a very good radio (but expensive).

o

In many of my stories I gave medical advice. When my brain still worked a little, I could think well enough to try and avoid giving bad advice. Derek assigned Aaron as my driver, not because I couldn't drive, but because my brain slowed to the point that I would be like an epileptic and might go a mile or more and not know I did it. Worse, I sometimes became hypoglycemic. There isn't much practical difference between being epileptic and hypoglycemic, you're totally out of control. Consequently, I quit giving medical advice. The statement from the Bible is, physician heal thyself (Luke 4:23) and it was more like *no way, Jose*.

I'm assuming Derek will tell you more about the guys when they show up. I don't speak modern Army jargon, sorry. I know whiskey, but only the drinking kind. It sounded like we'd more than double our force and pick up all kinds of things we didn't have. That crazy kid would probably want to take on the husslin' Muslim.

o

In fact, we had quite an arsenal going now. Dustoff showed up first, of course, with six nice, new Blackhawk helicopters. Their nickname was the common call sign for all Army medevac units, but in this case it was the 498th Air Ambulance Company. I assume that they got in partly because they were all marked plainly with nice, big red crosses on the sides. What the UN puked forgot was that even medevac choppers carry miniguns now, thanks in no small part to some of the insurgent activities the Army had faced over the

last several decades. Your average official soldier from another country saw the red cross and knew that the Geneva Conventions banned attacks on it because of the rescue missions being flown. Your average insurgent, on the other hand, saw the red cross and thought the Americans very stupid to put a crosshair on the side of their aircraft. Thus, even medevac choppers could put an amazing amount of firepower on target to secure the landing zone, and so long as the fire remained defensive Geneva couldn't say anything.

The other reason they got in was that this was the 498th, a unit made famous for its daring rescue missions flown during Vietnam. Nap of the Earth flying, an ugly method requiring the pilot to dodge the ground at high speed, was practically invented by the 498th and units like them. I felt better knowing that we had the best chopper pilots in the world at our disposal.

Bataan showed up next, and boy was I glad to see them. 1st Battalion, 168th Armor Regiment was a bunch of Minnesota National Guards that belonged to the same brigade as I did back when I was in the Iowa Guard. Normally, their complement was 58 tanks, 8 120mm mortar carriers, and various support vehicles. They did not have mechanized infantry, normally, unless they had exchanged a company of tanks (14) for a company of Bradleys' (20) from another command. These guys were every bit as anti-social as any cavalry scout, though, and decided that they didn't want to act in support of UN invasions. Thus, they headed south at a medium pace, picking up as many stray soldiers and equipment along the way as they could. Due to attrition they now had exactly the proper complement for a cavalry squadron: 41 tanks and 41 Bradley's. I'm sure that all those tankers were slightly insulted by my comment to that fact. Armor units know that the Cav *sux*, just like Cav units know the reverse.

One other nice little fact was that their Bradley's were Infantry models. That meant 8 soldiers per track. Rounding their personnel count up gave me 164 tankers, 328 mechanized infantrymen, 30 mortarmen, and about a hundred or so support personnel, or one good Armored Cavalry squadron. I joked with the Bataan commander about retasking his unit as cav; one look from that grizzled old light colonel said more than enough. This was a unit whose proud history included surviving the Bataan Death March. This unit held the distinction of being the original *Battling Bastards of Bataan*, a fact that they were extremely proud of. Hence the unit call sign Bataan and their unofficial nickname, the Bastards. Armor they would remain, if only in name.

Ugly was the biggest surprise, and possibly the most welcome. This unit had no history, calling themselves the 1st provisional volunteer infantry. Their CO was a retired sergeant major from the 101st who bled red, white and blue, and the men were mostly former soldiers who had the same sort of bloodstream. The rest were kids too young to serve in the US Army.

That crusty old Sergeant-Major had whipped them into shape, forging perhaps the finest militia unit in history. The Ugly Stepchildren could march 36 miles in a day, every day, for weeks on end. They could cross any terrain, make something out of nothing better

than 9 times out of 10, and could sneak up on a paranoid sniper without making them twitch. What's more, their composition told me that we weren't the only ones out there who would stand up for our beautiful, sacred land.

o

All I wanted was a little peace and quiet. I wanted someone to make the bad guys go away and never come back. More, I wanted the country to return to the best times, the '50s. No, not the 1850s, the 1950s, I'm not quite THAT old. That's why I like *Ronnie Milap's* song, *Lost in the Fifties Tonight*. Times were tough in the country, but the country still had values. These days, it was *What's mine is mine and what's yours, is mine, if I can get*. [The topic of a sermon delivered by Rev. Green when I was in High School.] It also appeared the national language was Spanish.

There wasn't any reason for Ron, Clarence and I to patrol the fence, so we did it anyway. I went to bed early that night and never heard the Thump, Thump of the Blackhawk's when they arrived. It only made sense to have a dustoff unit, we had an M*A*S*H unit. The day after the armor unit showed up, they had tanks, Bradley's and even mortars. Derek said there were over 300 additional soldiers coming in. He wasn't wrong; the soldiers were there by Thursday night. These guys must be good; they got around 2 Regiments of UN troops. That was a drunken brawl, let me tell you. I didn't even know we were brewing beer.

Derek explained that 6 Paladins made an artillery unit called a battery. If that's the case, what did 45 tanks make? We had our four and the 41 that drove in. How many soldiers are in a Bradley IFV? Six and 6 times 41 is another 246 dismounts plus the Bradley crews. For all of our lying we were actually close to a short Brigade. Not just any Brigade, a Brigade who absolutely hated the UN. We had people from Minnesota, the southeast and the rest from here and there.

It seemed our only problem was the 120mm ammo for the tanks. It has a maximum life of 10 years, maybe less. Sabot ammo is made in Iowa at the Iowa Army ammunition plant in Middletown, Iowa. The ammo case is made out of nitrocellulose. That's the part that goes bad, not the sabots or the HEAT warhead. Derek claimed if we could get new rounds from Middleton (near Burlington) they could swap out the warheads. If he says so, I'll assume it's true. Meanwhile we could use up most of the old ammo, depending on the condition of the disintegrating cartridge. The sabot round is also the most popular tank round.

With them having 2 Regiments and our having a short Brigade, we were outnumbered maybe 4-6 to 1. If we were to get beyond them, it would take a concentrated attack against only one of their Regiments. The question was, to what purpose? The answer was if we didn't break out, they'd eventually come for us and take everything we had. Derek said if we could punch a hole in their lines, he could get to Iowa and locate more tank ammo, or the components.

By this time, late fall of 2014, the Amigos were almost beyond caring. We were old, and oh so tired. I sometimes wondered if we wouldn't have been better off if we had been in Tucson, shopping, when the war occurred. It must have been the depression that sometimes crept in despite the Zoloft. Sharon was depressed too and took Prozac to control it. It worked better for her than the Zoloft did for me.

The UN Regiments solved one problem; they kept the bad guys away. I'm not sure why we had a stalemate, maybe they actually believed we had a full Brigade with more coming all of the time. They had to see the evidence, you can't move that large of an armor force without leaving signs. Maybe they mistook the Blackhawks for Apaches. That would have been nice, a detachment of Apaches, equipped with Hellfire missiles, Hydra rockets and those 30mm cannons. Like all of our equipment they were vulnerable to machinegun and rocket fire.

After several days of scouting, a patrol found a gap in the encirclement. It was still a long way to Middleton but after checking all of the tanks rounds, they found enough swelled they didn't have much choice. Bill and Derek decided to make the mission with 10 vehicles, 4 10-ton trucks, 1 fuel hauler and 5 HMMWVs. If they found more ammo than that, they'd appropriate a civilian tractor trailer. I thought it a fool's errand, Derek's was very confident. Derek would lead the mission and with good travel times said they could be back in 5 days.

At oh dark thirty, one cold and blustery morning, they launched the mission, sending scouts and infantry ahead to clear the way. My contribution was to supply a dozen suppressors that they promised to return. I wasn't really contributing much these days, my banker duties had been taken over when I made a math error. Every morning The Three Amigos bundled up to keep warm and patrolled the acreage, a make work project. The nearest troops were probably 15km out just maintaining the encirclement.

One scouting party reported that not all of the troops assigned to the 2 Regiments were concentrated on keeping us in. Instead, they were ranging much of southern Arizona, confiscating food and guns. Their mission was hard, not one Arizonan was willing to cooperate. They were finding some food, but no firearms, an unlikely scenario in Arizona.

We had finally completed moving in all of the containers from Ft. Huachuca. There were camouflaged containers everywhere and we had more ordnance than we could shoot up in years. My new goal, everyone has to have goals, was to shoot down a Hind with my Tac-50. I was counseled that only a hit to an engine would do and I'd have to find one hovering fairly close to pull it off. The crew compartment of all series of Hinds was well armored; I couldn't simply shoot the pilot. Someone had shot down a chopper in *Pax Americana* using a .50 cal.

"Forget it Gar, there hasn't been a chopper here in weeks, not since we unloaded those Stingers on them."

"We'll have to lure one in, any ideas?"

"Yeah, let's go back to house and get more coffee."

"So we can talk it over?"

"So we can talk you out of it."

"Fat chance, but I'll be patient. One of these days one of them will come cruising by looking for something and I'll get him – Derek and Bill got 2 at a liquor store of all places."

"Aren't you tired yet?"

"Exhausted, how about you?"

"Clarence and I were talking, we're both tired. You have about 1,000 soldiers; can't you let them do it from now on?"

"I could, but Max needs his exercise."

"Starting tomorrow, we aren't going. If you need someone to go with you, get Aaron."

"That kid watches me like a hawk as it is, it's about the only chance I have to get away from him. You're really not going?"

"That's it, today was our last trip. Just stay with us and let Aaron exercise Max."

"I'll have to let you know. I'm afraid if we don't keep active, we won't be any help when those UN boys attack."

"We can still go to the range. We've both noticed that a trip to the range thoroughly wears you out. The last time we went, you had to take a day off to recover."

"No I didn't, I had a cold."

o

They won by default, the next day I was so tired, I slept until noon. After I got up, showered, dressed and had breakfast, I found them in my den drinking coffee.

"Aaron had already had Max out, pull up a chair and rest yourself."

"When are they supposed to be back?"

"From Iowa? Three more days."

"Did he say what?"

"You know he is about secrecy; I don't have a clue. I don't believe we'll be involved. He said much of his plan depends on what they find up in Iowa."

"Not counting Derek's tank, we have 11 tank platoons, a battery of artillery, mechanized infantry and assorted dismounted infantry. Give us a squadron of fighter bombers and it would be over in nothing flat. I think you guys were right, what we really need is Strike Eagles and a few loads of bombs."

"What's the basic Air Force unit, Gary?"

"A squadron, Clarence. Three Squadrons make a Wing. Back in the '90s, they kept changing the Squadron sizes, last I knew a Squadron had 24 planes and a Wing, 72. Thing is, I don't know where we'd find a wing of Strike Eagles. For all I know, a Wing might be composed of a squadron or two of F-16s and one Squadron of F-15s."

"They were replacing the F-15s with F-22s?"

"That was the plan and the F-35s were supposed to replace the F-16s. Don't know that it happened, what with the war and all."

What I didn't know was that Congress, after Iraqi Freedom ended, diverted large sums of money to both the F-22 and F-35 programs. We had produced almost 500 of the F-35s, ~400 for the Air Force. The F-22 program was completed, far ahead of schedule. The government clamped a lid on the news and the American public was unaware that the Air Force was, for the first time since 'Nam, almost over strength. In a move that would have made a conspiracy theorist proud, ordnance for the aircraft was widely distributed, with a vast quantity stored at Ft. Huachuca, an Army facility.

The apparent explanation was that the money had already been allocated to the war and homeland security sucks. You know how the government is, once they allocate money, they're loath to not spend it. The Air Force got the 381 F-22s it wanted, ~ 400 F-35s and the Navy and the Corps had a few of the new joint strike fighters. The buildup ended when the war came but the F-15s and F-16s hadn't yet been retired, the phase out was gradual.

Our Sergeant cum Lieutenant cum Lt. Col. finally connected up with a Squadron of Eagles. I mentioned the CBU-75 Sadeye earlier. The Squadron had those, JDAMs and several other types of bombs.

There are two Mountain Homes that I know of. One is in Arkansas close to where my son lived for years. The other is in Idaho. Thankfully, the Idaho city has the 391st Fighter Squadron and their 24 F-15E Eagle fighters. The 391st had been deployed to support the UN operations in Arizona. Since the Air Force I knew and loved demanded that their personnel have integrity, courage, and moral fortitude, their presence actually became a

blessing. Disgusted by the UN tactics and the unjust mission, the pilots and ground crews had decided to look for something else to do. Lucky us, we were just where they needed us to be.

Whetstone – Chapter 32

The wing that the 391st was assigned to also had the 172nd Fighter Squadron (A-10C Thunderbolt II) attached to it. Best of all, it was the 162nd Fighter Wing, a unit that I was sure had been wiped out with Tucson. The 162nd boasted 3 full squadrons of F-16E/F fighters before the additional squadrons were attached. In total, we had 24 F-15E Strike Eagles, 72 F-16E Block 60 fighters from the 162nd, and 24 A-10C Thunderbolt II ground attack fighters. It was a sizeable little air force for us to chance upon.

The fighters were relocated to Ft. Huachuca after the nukes ruined their base in Tucson. Thankfully, they were able to reconstitute and redeploy them. Now they would fly missions in support of us instead of the UN, with a little help from some fellow officers that were fed up with the Commander-in-Chief to cover their tracks. Obama would crap his drawers if he knew we were commandeering *his* expensive hardware and highly-trained pilots. Thank God he knew nothing about how his military worked. With a bit of luck, we might get even more units sent our way *in support of contingency operations* that would remember their allegiance was to the Constitution, not the President.

With enough defections, Mr. President might just give up.

o

Although Ron never said anything, I believe that he was concerned about our having automatic weapons and suppressors. They were strictly controlled by the NFA of 1934, another example of the government meddling in our lives. First off, a suppressor doesn't silence a firearm; it reduces the sound to a bearable level. Many gangsters of the 20s and 30s preferred the Tommy gun, while still others, like Clyde Barrow, preferred the BAR. Was there some magic that made a shotgun with a 17" barrel any more dangerous than one with an 18" barrel?

The law didn't prevent LEOs from having the weapons, just the public. You could have one, provided you were willing to cough up \$200 for the tax stamp and pass the background check. Think about that in the terms of the economy in 1934... \$200 was nearly a fortune when many were working for \$1 a day. Next, there was the question of where the gangster came from in the first place. Yes, Virginia, we've always had criminals, but Prohibition gave them a new source of money and they had millions of more than willing customers.

The government created the situation in the first place; then when the bad guys took advantage of the latest weapons for their rivalries, rather than legalize liquor, they outlawed certain firearms and accessories. It was a case of a pound of cure for an ounce of trouble. To make matters worse, many states outlawed all of the NFA weapons and even if the feds approved the purchase, you still couldn't legally own one whatsoever.

Having lived in Kalifornia since he was 2 weeks old, Ronald had been taught from day one that NFA firearms were bad things that only criminals had. Thus for whatever rea-

son, he was very uneasy with the selection of weapons we had. I was the opposite and always felt the government had overstepped its authority when they outlawed machine guns, short barreled rifles, suppressors, destructive devices, and that special class, *any other weapon*. It only got worse with the GCA of '68 and the FOPA of '86. Hillary's husband got through an Assault Weapons Ban when he was Prez, but it had a sunset clause, thank God.

When the fat was in the fire, none of this kept good ol' Ronald from using the weapons, although I still could tell, it bothered him. Had it been up to me, I'd have mounted Mk19s on our front and back decks, but we didn't have enough to allow that. And when it came to my grabbing a weapon in a hurry, I generally reached for that Kalifornia legal M1A. Given a choice between spraying and praying vs. one well-placed shot, the latter always prevailed. I keep the 10 round magazine that came with the rifle loaded with Black Hills 165gr BTSP point ammo, 'cause you never knew when an edible critter might get into your sight picture.

Like I'd ever see an edible critter now that we spent most of our days in my den. At best, the 3 of us were consigned to monitoring the radios Damon had moved from the shelter to the den. We kept our guns loaded and powder dry just in case. I kept the volume up on the SINCGARS so we'd know immediately if the UN were attacking. They weren't, of course, they had other plans.

By stationing a Regiment on each side of us they hoped to keep us contained until they were ready to do whatever evil deed Obama assigned to them. Meanwhile, they controlled most of southern Arizona, except for Davis-Monthan and Ft. Huachuca. They weren't about to go up against 5 Squadrons of Air Force or the remaining force at the Fort. It was rumored that Obama was at Cheyenne Mountain and SecDef Clinton was at Holloman.

o

A little explanation about the armed services is in order right now. Although most former members already know these things, many civilians don't.

Every service member, from the rank-and-file enlisted to the highest officers, swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and to obey the orders of the President. National Guard members add the Constitution of their respective state and their Governor to this oath, following the same patterns.

Note that the oath is to the Constitution, not the government. This raises the question of why.

If the oath was to the Government, the service member would be pledging themselves to serve the people elected to represent the nation and the people who elected them instead of the nation itself. Thus, the services would become the property of those elected officials and the people that elected them.

The Founding Fathers had the wisdom to realize that when the Armed Forces of a nation belong to the leaders instead of the citizens that those forces can be used against those citizens to project the power of the elected officials. This is what the ruling monarchs in Europe had done for centuries.

The United States of America was a different form of government. It needed a different form of allegiance from its armed forces. Out of this was born the following concepts: the services belong to the people and swear an oath to the Constitution itself; the services cannot be used to police the people except in cases of national emergency, and then only so long as is necessary to restore order; the people themselves had the right to arm themselves against the government if it became corrupt so that they could defend the Constitution against those who would pervert it.

Now, the elected President had decided that the mounting crisis within the borders of the United States justified his declaration of martial law, nationalization of critical resources, and invitation of foreign troops onto American soil to maintain public order. In doing this he subordinated the authority of the Constitution to that of the United Nations.

As every graduate of public high school can tell you, civics class teaches you that the Constitution is the supreme law of the United States. What he did, therefore, was extremely illegal.

Service members aren't as dumb as some people think, though. When these acts happened, the members themselves each faced a personal crisis. Do we rebel against the corrupted government to restore the Constitution as the supreme law of the land, or do we follow orders from the President whom we swore to obey?

The answer is that we continue to serve the office until such time as we can act to restore the Constitution.

Now, Dad didn't know that we were using what connections we still had to contact the Armed Forces of the United States as often as we were able to remind them of their oath to the Constitution. I was a bit afraid that if I told him that I was doing this he would feel that I had subordinated the wellbeing of our family and friends in our small community to that of the same corrupt government that took away his rights before the crisis. Nothing could be farther from the truth, but he was getting old enough that I feared the kind of roaring argument that would follow might threaten his health.

The truth is that the folks like Dad, Sharon, Ron, Clarence, and the other older people that remembered the freedom we youngsters could only dream about were depressed because they could remember that freedom and mourned its loss. Those of us born after the slow decline of freedom that the older folks mourned now fought to restore a level of freedom that we had never really had. One speech was usually enough to spark the interest of other freedom-minded individuals our own age.

It's interesting that in basic training every new recruit is taught that they no longer practice the freedoms guaranteed them by the Constitution, but to protect those freedoms for everyone else. That fact makes service members easier to remind with a little speech of their true allegiance.

The word was out through the rumor mills and scuttlebutt that there was a bunch of service members standing up to the occupying army of the President down around the Four Corners. Every once in a while a few service members would disappear because of this rumor. Most reappeared in a few days to a few weeks somewhat closer to the Four Corners area. Some didn't reappear.

The lucky ones were the ones who stayed gone. My sources told stories of drumhead trials and hangings for deserters.

o

I set out to pick up some ammo from Iowa and Illinois. Dad knew about that mission. I didn't set out to rally the Armed Forces to the flag.

That's what happened, though.

As we made our way across the country we ran into patrols, checkpoints, and units deployed to police up firearms, food, and medical supplies. The UN troops got a line of bull about how we were transferring the vehicles to another garrison that was always just a few more miles up the road; it worked, too, thanks in part to acting classes I took in college and in part I think to Divine Providence. The US forces heard something else.

I appealed to the guys face to face. I was legally a Lieutenant Colonel because of a very old tradition known as Full Faith and Credit and the fact that the legally constituted government of the state I served kept their own promotion lists. So long as I was in the National Guard, my rank was determined by the elected government in Arizona. As far as we knew, that government was based in Whetstone. Thank goodness for that. A light Colonel gets a little more time to explain.

All of the American units I ran into were sympathetic when I explained to them. Service members are a pretty loyal bunch when it comes to America and we were all sick and tired of the way the government was running things. None would volunteer any information about us and our whereabouts to the UN officers they reported to by Executive Order. A very few implied that they would head south west.

Nobody loves a soldier until the enemy is at the gates. This time, the enemy was inside the gates before we knew what was happening. The civilians that saw us proudly flying the Stars and Stripes from our radio antennas definitely loved us. We had hot meals all the way there and back, even when the families providing them looked like they needed them more than we did. To repay them for their hospitality we gave away the food we didn't eat thanks to them and arranged quietly with our ever-expanding network of "bat-

tle buddies” to misroute some of the food seized by Obama’s troops to them. It wasn’t much, but it was all that we could do.

I meant to load up with as much ammo as I could get. The support units that heard about us did us one better. We were at each of the two depots less than two hours and got a full load between them of everything we needed, from bullets to grenades to rockets. Someone even conjured up some fake orders for us, labeling this shipment as *necessary ordnance for the contingency operations in Arizona*. Good old American know-how and the kind of sneakiness that made the Continental Army successful back in the Revolution got us more than we ever bargained for: Ft. Huachuca would now be getting occasional resupply from the ordnance depots and Obama would never be the wiser. Officially, the resupply convoys would be headed for the UN forces stationed there. Unofficially, each convoy would have whatever we asked for to be delivered to Ft. Huachuca before they brought a mixed bag of defective and semi-defective supplies to the UN. The additional items would never be on the books so there would be no paper trail, either.

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The fighters were relocated to Ft. Huachuca after the nukes ruined their base in Tucson. Thankfully, they were elsewhere during the strikes and had survived mostly intact. Now they would fly missions in support of us instead of the UN, with a little help from some fellow officers that were fed up with the Commander-in-Chief to cover their tracks. Thank God he knew nothing about how his military worked.

“Hi, Dad.”

“Well, how did it go?”

“Better than we expected. The Americans we ran into are fed up with the UN and Obama. We now have all the ordnance we could ever use set up to be delivered to Ft. Huachuca and more units headed this way. The General I ran into even promoted me to Full Colonel and ordered me to manage the units he could get sent down here as commander of Joint Task Force Apache.”

“Great, but what is Joint Task Force Apache?”

“You see all these guys that snuck in? They are part of a new off-the-books taskforce of Americans who will eventually drive the UN out of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. The taskforce will contain units from every service branch. To that end, I have to ask the local people for permission to quarter a Navy construction battalion just south of Whetstone.”

“What for?”

“To help rebuild the local infrastructure. Whetstone is going to be the support community for Ft. Huachuca, providing some of the support needed to operate the base and in return getting some of the food and critical supplies that Obama is rounding up.”

I was getting mighty angry by this point. Derek sounded like he had gone over to the other side. “So you work for Obama now?”

“No, Dad. This is off-the-books. The Joint Chiefs of Staff don’t know it yet, but they’re not in command of the Armed Forces. The units I ran into were pretty happy to help us regain control of our own country and restore the Constitution.”

“So what does that have to do with us?”

“Dad, do you like the thought of the United Nations stationing troops around your land?”

“No.”

“Neither does any other real American. There’s a civil war brewing right now, Dad, and our quiet little town is getting famous as one of the last bastions of freedom. Some guy up in Utah is doing something similar up there, and the native tribes like the Navajo are making sure that the UN can’t enter reservation lands pretty effectively. Whetstone is one of the principle rallying points for the Four Corners, Dad. There are folks all over that want to know why it is that we are left alone for the most part, including Obama. Truth is that most of the forces he wants to pacify the Four Corners are getting into trouble before they leave Texas and Oklahoma. Civilization as we know it might be over, but America still lives in the hearts of her citizens.”

"No chit, tell me more."

“Liberals like Obama are moving to Washington as fast as they can get there. The locals all over the country have brought back some time-honored traditions like tarring-and-feathering. The UN has its hands full rounding up the leaders of such *rebellious acts* and hanging them publicly. Folks are starting to think that we can get the crooked SOB out of office.”

"I'm not sure about that, son. What about the military units that are loyal to him?"

"There aren't many left. Right now, they're giving lip service to Pentagon and behind their backs, being loyal Americans."

"While you were gone, Damon moved the radios out of the shelter into my Den. Ron and Clarence refused to continue the patrols with me, so I have Aaron walking Max and spend my days in the Den."

"Taking it easy?"

"Hell, I even gave up my banker duties. They gave you the Bird, I see, when do you get the Star?"

"Not bad for an E-5, huh?"

"Seems to me that a Bird Colonel is an O-6, you changed letters from E to O and added one rank. It was just a shame you couldn't get into West Point when you graduated from High School. I'll tell one thing kid, I ain't gonna salute you. I crossed swords with a Bird Colonel way back when, he won. He was a fighter jock who got assigned to run the Rocket Site. He was po'd to begin with and my antics didn't really help."

Joint Task Force Apache? Why not Navajo or Hopi? It was probably because of Geronimo. He had surrendered at Skeleton Canyon, located 30 miles northeast of the town of Douglas, a ways southeast of here on 80. It seemed more than fitting in a way; the 2nd Revolutionary War would be fought by Apaches. Maybe someone would get to Colorado Springs and bring down the Prez. With what little information he gave me, I couldn't tell if we'd ended up with a Brigade, Regiment or Division. Well, not a Division, those were commanded by 2 star Generals. A Bird Colonel could command a Regiment or Brigade and a Brigade could be as large as 2 Regiments.

The reference to gold is because the Spanish were rumored to have hidden 2 tons of gold in a cave in Skeleton Canyon. It's a long way from Phoenix, so I guess it's not the source of the Dutchman's gold. East of Phoenix a ways is a depleted gold mine, cum tourist trap. I always sort of figured that location was the Dutchman's gold. I'll be darned if I can remember the name of the mine, but when I was there they had a mining demonstration and a store where I bought a book about the Lost Dutchman Mine.

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Rallying point? Four Corners? We were a fair distance from the four corners, the junction of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. I wouldn't go there anyway, they charged admission, \$3 a head before the war. Me a rebel? It figured, my past was coming back to haunt me; when did I ever come up with the expression, *I'll do anything you ask me to do, but refuse to do anything you tell me to do?*

Man things had changed in the 8 years since we bought that PowerBOSS 7000. Those were simple times, I only fired my rifle on the range and we only used the generator once a month for 15 minutes to exercise it. Sitting in the Den, the 3 of us weren't getting any exercise. How hard was it to fire up the ATV and run the fence line? We hadn't burned any more calories doing that than we did sitting in the Den. We didn't care anymore; we were too old for this chit.

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Once upon a time, there was a mountain that represented the heart and soul of the United States Department of Defense. A massive rock, immovable and strong, that

housed the greatest command center ever devised. NORAD, they called it, the North American Defense Command.

Cheyenne Mountain. The last bastion of the free world.

Not anymore. Now it was our ultimate target.

"Apache 6, this is Blackhorse 6, over."

I picked up the hand mike and depressed the push-to-talk button. "Apache 6, over."

"Your axis of advance is generally 045 degrees. Strike today's objects and report when set. Out."

Boy, was it nice to be taking orders for once. After all those years in uniform I was used to someone telling me what to do from time to time. I was also used to the relative bliss of having a small area of responsibility compared to what I had now. Don't get me wrong. Not one soldier to ever put on the uniform got through so much as a week of serving without thinking that he knew better than his officers. Even the officers knew that one; well, at least the good ones did.

The Four Horsemen were the commanders of the groups assigned to the various areas leading up to and around Cheyenne Mountain. In the north was Whitehorse 6, a screwball infantryman with nearly a full division of irregulars behind him, all from former Confederate states. They would secure Denver and Colorado Springs along the I-25 corridor. From the west would come Redhorse 6, two brigades worth of Midwestern farmboys in heavy combat vehicles led by an old friend of mine, Matt Bogardus. I knew him back when he wore three up and two down; now he wore a single star. They would cut off everything from the east and set up their headquarters in Security, Colorado. From the south, my new boss would lead the rest of Blackhorse up through Four Corners and Pueblo. Between the three forces, the foreign invaders that Obama was using to protect himself would be pinned against the Rampart Range.

Last but not least would be Palehorse 6. Somehow, somewhere, someone in Kalifornia had managed to gather up some of the best warplanes ever built. I'm talking about F-22s, F-35s, B-2s, and that wild weasel version of the F-16. They were assembled into a huge mega-group nicknamed Taskforce Death by some melodramatic idiot. Behind them would follow several massive cargo lifters loaded to the gills with paratroopers from every airborne unit still in service. Back in WWII there had been five proud airborne divisions, the 11th, 13th, 17th, 82nd, and 101st. All five patches were supposed to be represented in the second half of Palehorse, nicknamed Taskforce Hell. Those brave paratroopers would drop in on NORAD and penetrate the mountain after we isolated it.

Overall command was in the hands of what was left of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Their callsign was Pentagon 6, but we were beginning to call them the Pens-are-gone 3. They

didn't seem to know the first thing about running a fourth-generation war. For that matter, I sometimes wondered if they had caught on that we were in the middle of one.

The Pens-are-gone 3 did give us some crypto gear so that we could encode our radio traffic and a mountain of operational orders and acetate map overlays so that we could see exactly what their massively complex and ultimately doomed plan of action was. I found every bit of what they gave us useful. I loaded the cryptographic sets into my SINCGARS radio and used the rest to start fires in burn barrels so that the men could warm themselves.

Now, one piece of this overblown plan I liked, but only from a point of honor. There were five airborne divisions at the height of their prominence. One saw action in the Pacific Theater. Three saw action in the European theater.

One didn't see any action. Guess which division that was? Right, the 13th. They were organized on the 13th of August 1943, sent to Europe in January of 1945, and sent right back home in August. The Black Cat Division never saw much of anything except for a regiment transferred in from the 82nd that never respected the rest of the soldiers in this hard luck division.

The All-Americans and the Screaming Eagles laughed at their less storied cousins in the 11th, 17th, and especially the 13th. The Angels of the 11th could claim that they had invented Air Assault to silence the 101st. The Thunder from Heaven cited proudly their battle credits and won grudging respect from the 82nd. The Black Cats, however...

So what ever did our fearless leaders do? Put the 13th in the forefront of the raid. They would make the first drop, followed by the fearless paratroopers of the 82nd and 17th and finally by the air assault divisions.

Never mind the fact that the 13th was a bunch of civilian skydivers and parasailing adrenaline junkies. They could hack it, right?

As for a backup plan, the braniacs had reactivated the 2d Cavalry Division. This was another unit like the 13th Airborne that had seen no combat. It was another hard luck unit, but with a difference. The Black Cat division was cursed by superstition: The 2d Cavalry was cursed by the permanent tan many of the members wore. Originally organized with the 9th, 10th, and 11th Cavalry Regiments assigned, it finally gathered together all the Buffalo Soldiers (read: black cavalry troopers) into one division. I was surprised only that they weren't used in some farcical mission, like Operation Human Shield or Operation Cannon Fodder. The natives of the Plains tribes respected the tenacity and fighting ability of these soldiers for decades before that war, yet the unit was never trusted to face actual combat as a division. What a crock.

My guys were attached to Blackhorse. Frankly, I didn't mind that much. These fellow soldiers had a deep pride and a burning need to redress past wrongs. There wasn't much else that could be better for morale than that. Strangely enough, the troopers of

2d Cavalry were a broad spectrum, from the descendants of those buffalo soldiers to the great-grandsons of those who deemed them inferior to members of the tribes the buffalo soldiers used to chase around this area over a hundred years ago.

Pride was the point I liked. Whitehorse had the pride of the Old South to restore. The Airborne was led by the boys who never fought. Our division had generations of second-class status to erase. Even those Midwestern boys had something to prove: when I was with them, we were told that we wouldn't go anywhere until the aliens landed in Kansas City. Pride would give us everything we needed.

The Pens-are-gone 3 didn't know it, but they couldn't have assembled a more unlikely bunch.

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I lined up my guys abreast of each other and told them to hold formation no matter what happened. We were the eastern flank of Blackhorse, so we had the most level terrain to work with. In front of us we could see the Great Plains meeting the foothills of the Rockies. It had been a long road march to get us in position. Now it was our job to make sure that nothing got between us and the southern flank of Redhorse until we linked up with them. They were currently 8 hours away from us.

My guys were grumbling about our task. I reminded them that no job was unimportant but they wanted to see some action.

"Apache 6, this is Ugly 2. Contact, east, over."

"Ugly 2, this is Apache 6. Give me a SALUTE report, over." Ugly 2 was the operations guru with the Ugly Stepchildren. He was telling me that he saw something, and I wanted to know exactly what it was.

"Apache 6, observing tanks and pc's with dismounted support. Estimate brigade strength or better. Coming up from the southeast. They kinda look like the boys that were harassing us back in Arizona."

It wasn't the proper format but it was enough to proceed on. "Roger, Ugly 2. Guidons, guidons, this is Apache 6. Contact, east, tanks and pc's with dismounted support. Switch to echelon right formation and engage, over." Echelon right formation is simply a diagonal line with the trailing edge on the right side. I wanted to set my lines so that we would hit them in the flank all at once. I got acknowledgements from all the commanders under me.

I brought up my binoculars and took a look over towards the reported position of the enemy. Sure enough, there was the dust trail. They were trying to hit Redhorse in the rear.

"Gunner, give me a range."

Bill pressed the laser rangefinder button. "5700, sir."

"Guidons, Apache 6. Engage in 2 minutes, over." Again, the commanders acknowledged my order.

Two minutes was just long enough to get all my big guns in range. It doesn't seem like a long time, but when you are waiting to kill someone, 2 minutes is an eternity.

"Need something to steady yourself?"

I lowered my binos and looked down at Bill. He was holding out a hip flask. "Bill, are you drinking during combat?"

"Nope. I'm nipping just before combat. After this is over I'll be drinking."

"Right." I took the flask and had a sip of Bill's homebrew. The fire started immediately and burned its way through my senses to my stomach. Coughing, I handed it back to him. "How long did you age this batch?"

"Nearly 2 weeks. You promised me that we'd look for barrels to age it properly, remember?"

I put my eye up to the extension sight. "Range."

Bill put the crosshairs on a tank and pressed the button again. 4900 flashed in green under the crosshairs. I checked my watch. 2 minutes exactly.

"Guidons, Apache 6. Fire and adjust. Report when complete."

Bill pulled the trigger on that big gun, causing the breech to rock back about a foot and drop the brass from our first round. Through my hearing protection I could hear the thunder of dozens of similar explosions. I kept my eye in the sight and toggled over so that I could designate the next target for Bill while he watched the round in. "Target!" he screamed, releasing and grabbing his controls again. The big gun swung over to line up on the second target I had picked out. My loader rammed another round into the breech and rearmed the gun.

We cycled through the firing process four more times before I couldn't find a new target. "Scan for more targets. I'm going topside."

I popped my head up and looked through my binos, taking a quick scan of the horizon. A hundred columns of smoke remained to mark the burning hulks that once were combat vehicles. I could also just pick out the dismounted infantry as they finished ducking into the brush.

"Guidons, Apache 6. Good shooting. Prepare to receive antitank fires. As soon as they present a target, get those dismounts."

Bill switched from the main gun to his coaxially mounted machine gun. "I can't hit them from here, boss."

"Don't worry. Leave it on main gun. If you see a puff of smoke, put a round into that puff."

"Don't you think that's overkill, boss?"

"Maybe, but who's going to prosecute us for war crimes? Besides, I don't want this tank damaged."

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That was it, it wasn't easy but the patriots ended it. The framers of the Constitution saw the possibility that someday, someone would take it into their head that they were Above the Law. I could quote a hundred sources, but they all say the same basic thing, if the government gets too big for its britches, the people have a means to resist tyranny, that's really what the 2nd Amendment is all about. Somewhere along the way the country got too civilized for its own good and lead us down a path to destruction.

There was a song a long time back...

*The eastern world, it is exploding
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'
And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin'*

*But you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away
There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave
[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound to scare ya boy]*

*And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe*

*We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like coagulin'
I'm sitting here just contemplatin'
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation.
Handful of senators don't pass legislation
And marches alone can't bring integration
When human respect is disintegratin'
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin'*

*And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Think of all the hate there is in Red China
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama
You may leave here for 4 days in space
But when you return, it's the same old place
The poundin' of the drums, the pride and disgrace
You can bury your dead, but don't leave a trace
Hate your next-door neighbor, but don't forget to say grace
And... tell me over and over and over and over again, my friend
You don't believe
We're on the eve
Of destruction
Mm, no no, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.
Recorded by "Barry McGuire"
Written by "P.F. Sloan"
Album: "Eve of Destruction"*

The American media helped popularize the song by using it as an example of everything that was wrong with the youth of that time. The song also drew flak from both conservatives and liberals. On the right, a group called The Spokesmen released an answer record entitled *The Dawn of Correction*. A few months later, Barry Sadler released the patriotic *Ballad of the Green Berets*. The Temptations' song *Ball of Confusion (That's What the World is Today)* mentions the song title. The song was banned by some radio stations in the USA as well as by the BBC and Radio Scotland.

It was never a question of if, only when and what. Of all the tragedies in this tale, two stand out, WW III and the government's usurpation of power. Newt tells us WW III has already started, maybe he's right. Are any of the 10 *Bill of Rights* Amendments more

important than the other 9? If so, I'd vote for the 10th Amendment, States' Rights. Ask the people in New Orleans if you don't believe me. Most of us watched that happen on TV, live. Most of us watched 9/11 on TV. The Cold War never ended, it just changed character.

I'd like to thank Derek for his collaboration, especially on the military stuff. He has seen combat and helped immensely with those parts. My story Armchair Survivalists may be more accurate than you know. We started our preps; I only hope we have time finish them before the world situation gets totally out of hand. Some things are harder than others, for instance, how do you store enough gasoline to keep your generator running? If you live in the country, you probably have a farm tank, but try putting in one of those in the PRK if you live in a city.

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